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June 2014
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GoodFood

MIDDLE EAST

Hello, summer!

Embrace the season with cooling drinks and exquisite ices

WIN! Ultra-luxe beach breaks, cookbooks and dining vouchers

Bright SPARK

Eat to stay energised all day

Laying down the RAW law

All you need to know about Raw foodism

Bring on *Ramadan!*

Get set for the Holy Month with our smart tips

FATHER'S DAY TREATS

Inside



Gourmet vegetarian



Discover Slovenia

CPI MEDIA GROUP

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Dusit Thani
DUBAI



(Ramadan Lantern) Photo by GHADA ELATTAR

Make a child smile this Ramadan.

Celebrate the breaking of the daily fast more meaningfully as Dusit Thani Dubai donates a percentage to Operation Smile for every diner availing of our Iftar offerings.

Iftar Buffet Dinner on the 24th Floor

Traditional Arabic dishes and juices amidst an array of international delights take centerstage from participating specialty restaurants – Benjarong, PAX and The Californian – providing guests with a picturesque view of Dubai's cityscape.

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Dusit Smiles for Operation Smile

The Californian

Benjarong

PAX ITALIAN CUISINE

www.Dusit.com

BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

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Editor's photograph shot at STU WILLIAMSON PHOTOGRAPHY (04-348 8527) | Makeup by CLARINS

Welcome!



I like giving things a positive twist always. So, while moaning about the soaring summer heat is easy, why not focus on the good things that summer brings (yes, there are some!)? Luscious mangoes from the subcontinent is one, which the supermarket shelves are piled with at the moment. The looming summer holidays is another. And the opportunity to get creative with cooling drinks and ices is of course there.

We got some of Dubai's top mixologists to share their secret recipes for summer drinks – find eight delicious ideas on p43 (*Mixologists' mocktails*). If you want to take things to the next level, you could also try our cooling, delicious ices in *Summer sorbets*, p51. And to make sure you don't let the summer heat make you wilt – I always find my energy sapping as the temperatures rise – include some of our energy-boosting recipes in your everyday diet (*Food to stop you flagging*, p22).

Speaking of diets, now is probably a good time to think about a detox. Why not try the Raw Food diet? Fans of raw foodism and people who follow that lifestyle swear by its benefits. But read all about the pros and cons first in *Get yourself a raw deal*, p68. And if you don't want to do anything that drastic, you could simply think about eating more vegetarian food in the hotter months – you'll never miss meat again with the delicious vegetarian mains we feature in *Make veg the star*, p26.

There is lots more excitement in store this month – the upcoming FIFA World Cup (does anyone want to join me in forming a football widow club?), and Ramadan, which begins this June. Find out where to go to make the most of these special occasions in our *Flavours of the month pages* (p14), and learn how you can get ahead in your prep for the Holy Month in *Ready for Ramadan?*, p72. It's also the month for celebrating our daddies dearest (my dad will be visiting in June, can't wait!), so make him a homemade treat this Father's Day (*Don't forget Dad!*, p54) – it's the most precious kind of gift for a parent.

See, there's so much to look forward to! Here's to lovin' summer,

Sudeshna

Editor's picks



I'm converted to making my own yoghurt at home after using this. p11



A stylish mocktail is a summer party essential, p43



Switzerland has nothing on beautiful Slovenia!, p78

BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

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Our recipe descriptions

V Suitable for vegetarians
You can freeze it
Not suitable for freezing
Easy Simple recipes even beginners can make
A little effort These require a bit more skill and confidence – such as making pastry
More of a challenge Recipes aimed at experienced cooks
Low fat 12g or less per portion
Low cal 500 calories or less per main.
Superhealthy Low in saturated fat, 5g or less per portion; low in salt, 1.5g or less; and at least one of the following: provides one-third or more of your daily requirement of fibre, iron, calcium, folic acid and/or vitamin C, or counts at least one portion of your recommended 5-a-day fruit and veg.
Good for you Low in saturated fat, low in salt.
Heart healthy Low in saturated fat, with 5g or less, and low in salt, with 1.5g or less, and high in omega-3 fatty acids
1 of 5-a-day The number of portions of fruit and/or veg contained in a serving
Vit C **Iron** **Omega-3** **Calcium** **Folate** **Fibre** Indicating recipes that are good sources of useful nutrients
GLUTEN FREE Indicates a recipe is free from gluten

Some recipes contain pork & alcohol. These are clearly marked and are for non-Muslims only. Look for these symbols:
P Contains pork
Contains alcohol

Store Directory

Contact numbers for outlets featured in this issue

2XL Furniture: 04-2888071
Ace: 04-3411906
Biorganic: 04-4433535
Bloomingdale's-Dubai: 04-3505333
Harvest Home: 04-3420225
Homebox: 06-5236766
Ikea: 04-2037555
Lakeland: 04-3236081
Nespresso: 04-3399092
Sauce Gifts: 04-3883488
Tavola: 04-3402933
TWG Tea Salon and Boutique: 04-3253857
Villeroy and Boch: 04-3399676

Note: Prices in Qatari Riyals are approximately the same as UAE Dirhams.

Your say

We love to hear from you!

HOMEMADE IS BETTER!



My family and most of my friends like eating fatayer. Whenever they come over, I usually buy fatayers from a bakery. When I saw a recipe for it in the May issue (*Modern Middle Eastern*), I was excited and decided to prepare it at home. The dish came out very tasty and wasn't greasy at all. I was proud to eat fatayer prepared by myself and happy to learn another recipe from *BBC Good Food ME*.

Dounia Taha



FANS AROUND THE WORLD

I'm a citizen of Johannesburg, South Africa, and whenever I visit Dubai, I always purchase an issue of the magazine. Everything is so interesting and inspiring. I wish I could subscribe and get the magazine shipped to South Africa. It would be highly appreciated if you could look into the matter.

Tayyeba

EDITOR'S NOTE:

It's wonderful to know we have readers from across the oceans! While it isn't possible to subscribe to the print edition from South Africa, you will be able to download the digital issue from Magzter.com very soon – it has all the same content. Watch this space for details!

Join the foodie conversation online: share your thoughts, tips, and get our latest updates...

Win!

The winner of the Star Letter wins a **Dhs1,000 shopping voucher from Tavola**, the leading retailer of European products and essential items for the kitchen. Tavola is a one-stop shop for bake ware, tableware, high quality cookware and premium brands such as Mauviel, Le Creuset, and Zwilling kitchen knives. They have stores in the UAE and Qatar, as well as across the GCC.



Star Letter

KITCHEN SOLUTIONS



I recently moved to Dubai and was looking for inspiration for doing up my kitchen. I absolutely loved Shaikha's kitchen (*My Kitchen: Shaikha Al Ali,* May 2014) – the pinks, tiffany blue cupboard and green dining chairs are the kind of colours I would love to integrate into my kitchen. I'm definitely going to be buying paints and spending my weekends on DIY projects. The kitchen updates were genius ideas as well (*Smart, simple kitchen makeovers*). Although, living in an apartment, I can't modify the whole kitchen just yet, but I did pick up a few tips like decorating the fridge. Thank you, *BBC Good Food ME,* and keep up the good work!

Delis D'mello

FOODIE VACATION

My friends and I have started planning our summer holidays and we are all big foodies! After reading this month's issue on exciting food tours (*Adventures for the Gourmet Globe-Trotter*, May 2014), we have finally narrowed it down to the Truffle treats experience in Italy, and Meat mastery in France. We've already booked our tickets, and can't wait to go on our amazing foodie adventure!



Kerry Riles

FAST FIXES



There's nothing I love more than a one-pot dish – all the flavours come together, and it's so much easier to clean up after! The beef and vegetables casserole and Cajun chicken gumbo (*One-pot wonders,* May 2014) were all incredibly flavoursome and delicious. Since I cook for just my wife and me, we had quite a lot remaining the next day and I must say, the dish tasted even better!

Johnathan Cane

From our social media pages

- I am ridiculously proud of @RanaYassine! My famous friend and her blog zaatarandquinoa.com feature in @BBCGoodFoodME. – *Lisa Szatsznajder*
- Aspiring chefs mark the dates off for cooking competition with Samsung and BBC Good Food ME – *Sally Prosser*
- Thanks for sharing behind-the-scenes shots of your photoshoot. Can't wait to pick up the May issue - *Faiza Aliya Abbasi*

TALK TO US!

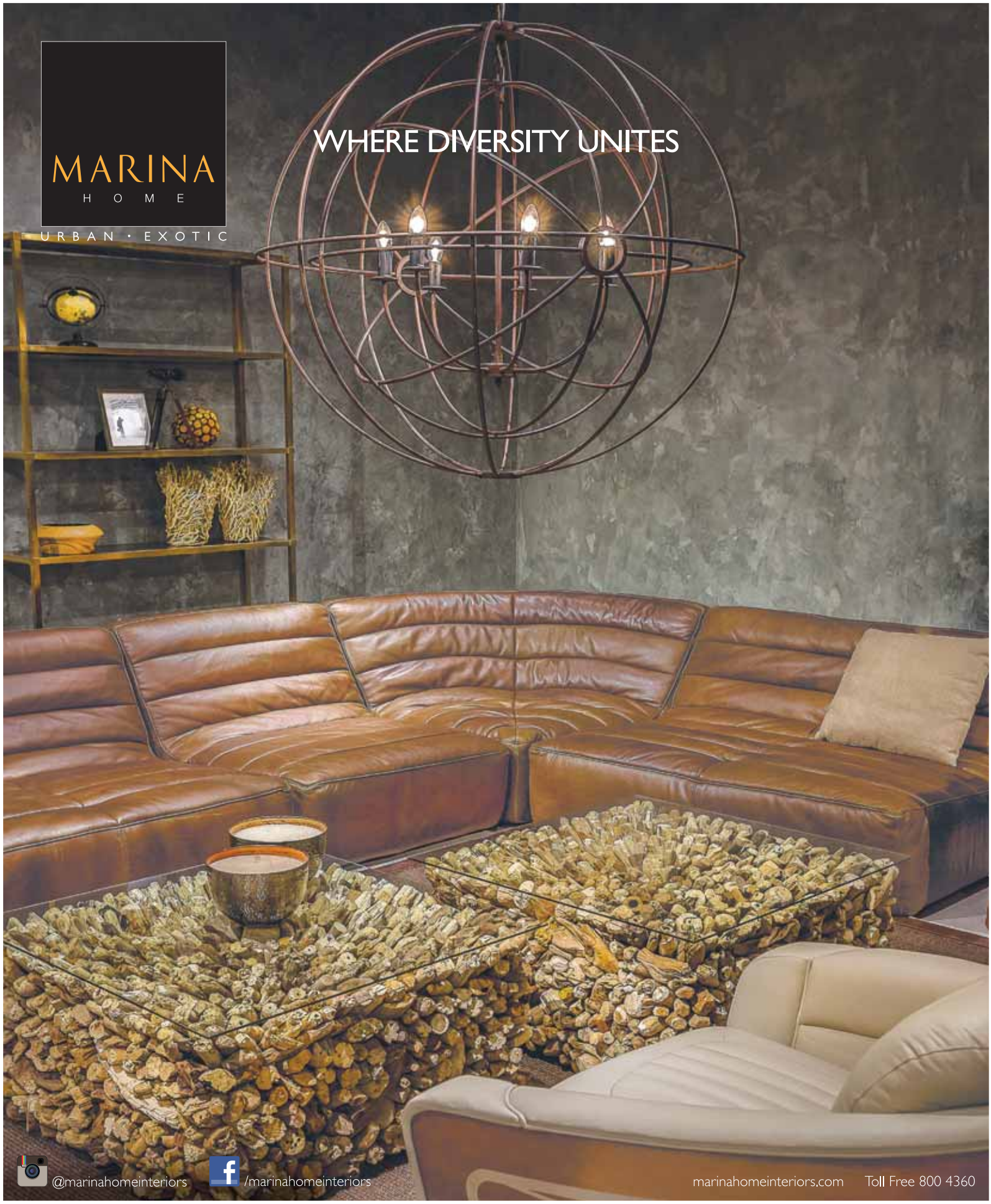
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Foodie file

What's hot and happening in the culinary world, here and around the globe.


Safi


Bystro

DINE IN THE CITY

FOUR FAB NEW RESTAURANTS TO CHECK OUT

✳ The new Marriot Hotel Al Jaddaf have opened a contemporary Northern Italian restaurant, Merletto. With Venetian flair running through the décor and menu, relish classics like carpaccio, risotto and sepia pasta, at this stylish venue. Call 04-3177700.

✳ Love seafood? Head down to Safi restaurant at the newly opened Ajman Saray Hotel which offers an array of fresh fish – 70 per cent of which come from local fishermen – cooked as you like it, but with Asian inflections in the menu, in a light, bright, airy space. Wash it down with delicious cocktails from the in-restaurant bar, and it will be worth the trip down to Ajman for! Call 06-7142222.

✳ The newest addition to the Al Manara strip alongside Sheikh Zayed Road that is fast becoming a gourmet hub is Bystro restaurant and pastry house. A home-grown modern-European-with-a-Tuscan-twist concept, the restaurant offers freshly made breakfasts, lunches and dinners in a sun-drenched, contemporary casual space. Everything is made fresh in-house – don't miss their beetroot hummous, decadent chocolate truffles, and gourmet teas! Call 04-3378506.

✳ Looking for light, healthy summer lunch options? Hotfoot it to Kauai, the new South African restaurant at Park Island promenade in Dubai Marina, to try freshly squeezed juices, smoothies, nutritious wraps and sandwiches such as Kahuna steak roll and smoked salmon – all made in whole wheat or Italian breads. Call 80052824.



This just in:

Who wouldn't love a salad served in this beautiful Artesano Provençal Salad Plate (Dhs160)? We love Villeroy and Boch's new collection inspired by the countryside of Provénce.

Eat well around the world



Mövenpick Hotels and Resorts ' 'Go Healthy' initiative, already a success in the Middle East, has now gone global. The special 'Go Healthy' dishes feature regional, seasonal ingredients that are light and nutritious, so if you like to stay health conscious on your travels, make a beeline for one of their hotels.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

What's trending

Entomophagy
We're not sure if we will ever try this one, but Entomophagy (consumption of insects as food) has been a hot topic of late! A number of people on Twitter have deemed grasshoppers and crickets delicious, while The Culture-ist (an online magazine) posted research on the similarities of protein and iron in bugs and red meat. Would you try it?



Home



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The Galleria at Al Maryah Island is hosting its first ever Restaurant Month from June 1 until the beginning of Ramadan. The festival will take over restaurants, cafés and the Rosewood Abu Dhabi Hotel in this shopping and dining hub, to offer a selection of tasting menus, cuisines, cooking demonstrations, live performances and competitions throughout the month. Expect treats like chocolate sin cake and an espresso for just Dhs73 from Godiva Chocolate Café; set menus for two at Sushi Art for Dhs250; and quesadillas for Dhs32 from Taqado, to name just a few options. Magnolia Bakery will also be re-creating a Cupcake Wonderland! Visit thegalleria.ae to find out more.

50%

of French people host an aperitif, a gathering where drinks and canapés are enjoyed before a meal, every week.
- According to the Les Francais et l'Aperitif study by IFOP.

"Food is our common ground, a universal experience."

- American chef and writer James Andrew Beard

STAYING ON TOP

If there's one restaurant in the world every foodie should add to their bucket list, it's **Noma**. The **Danish restaurant** has regained its title as the **S.Pellegrino World's Best Restaurant** once again, after three consecutive wins. The chef-owner, **René Redzepi**, focuses heavily on local produce and is known for his stunning and innovative creations like the **Blackcurrant berries and roses**, which reflect the **Danish landscape**.

Health focus in schools

Is Gary Rhodes the Jamie Oliver of Dubai? The Michelin-star chef has launched the Festival of Rhodes programme at Foremarke School, in collaboration with Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA). Gary aims to educate children on healthy eating and food sourcing with this campaign, which will see the school serving British classics such as steak and kidney pudding and toad in the hole, from a special menu that he has created, come September. Food will be made with local produce, and the children will also plant vegetables in the school's organic garden, which will be used. Here's hoping this concept spreads to schools across the region!



香宮

Shang Palace

presenting

The Art

OF AUTHENTIC SZECHUAN CUISINE



From 1st to 10th June, Shang Palace is showcasing an exotic, bespoke menu by awarding-winning executive sous chef of Shangri-La Hotel, Chengdu, Jason Wang. Featuring the bold, spicy flavours of Szechuan cuisine, experience a taste sensation as you sample a diverse selection of unique delicacies.

For enquiries and reservations call 04 405 2703

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Aisle file

Gorgeous gourmet buys, kitchen gear, home décor and more.



Iftar gatherings will get a contemporary, summery vibe, when you swap traditional lanterns for these pink **CLEAR GLASS LANTERNS** (available in sky blue as well). Dhs185 at **MARINA HOME.**



tWant to get into the World Cup spirit? **VILLEROY AND BOCH'S** latest World Cup collection will do the trick. Adorn your dining table with tableware in Brazil-inspired green, yellow and blue colours – we can't wait to take out this **S+ STAINLESS STEEL CUTLERY SET** on game night! Dhs1,160 for 24 pieces.



This lavender **ALFI GUSTO THERMAL CARAFE,** made with lacquered metal, is perfect for big batches of sulaimani tea or Ramadan drinks like jallab, as it can keep drinks hot for 12 hours and cold for 24 hours. Dhs310 at **TAVOLA**.



Show off your baked goodies and keep them fresh in these cute **BOTANY JARS**. Dhs220 each at **SAUCE GIFTS**.

Add a touch of vintage glam to your dining tables, by serving olive oil and balsamic vinegar in these stylish **MARIO LUCA GIUSTI 'SUSY' CRUET** glass bottles. Dhs375 at **BLOOMINGDALE'S HOME**.



These **FLORAL DECORATIVE BOXES** from **2XL'S** summer collection will be the ideal storage solution for messy bits and bobs – while adding a touch of feminine elegance to your home. Dhs141 for a set of three.



Add a pop of summer colour to your décor with these **BLOOM HOT PINK PLACEMATS** – not only are they stylish, but they're great value for money too! Dhs5 each, at **HOMEBOX**.



ON THE
STORE FRONT



Move over, Ikea (well, not quite, we do still love them!), but there's a new Swedish home store in town that has got our inner D-I-Y divas excited. **Clas Ohlson** has just opened its first Middle East store – the first of many more, we're told – in Mirdiff City Centre, to offer 1500 square metres of funky, functional home improvement products. A sort of Ikea-Ace hybrid, Clas Ohlson stocks everything from kitchen products (whether it's kitchen scales or table mats, it's all here) to outdoor accessories and even electronics and hardware. Call 04-2858596.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH; SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED



Here to help

Our expert chef Andy Campbell offers practical advice to tackle all your cooking dilemmas.



Q What's the best way to pack avocado for lunch?



A. Avocados spoil very quickly! I like to douse them in sweet chilli sauce or lime juice and then put it in a zip lock bag – with all the air pushed out. These bags can be frozen and used when needed.

Q I tried bread-crumbed crisp egg at a restaurant recently and tried to recreate it at home, but the yolk turned out too hard. What's the right way to make it?

A. Heat a heavy bottomed cast iron frying pan on a medium to hot heat. Meanwhile, soft-boil a room temperature egg for three minutes – the egg should always be at room temperature, as it takes longer to boil if it's cold. When the egg is boiled, roll in flour and breadcrumbs and then cook in a little vegetable oil for one minute.

Q My children love beetroot, but I'm not very creative with the vegetable and usually boil it. Do you have any suggestions?

A. I like to peel the beetroot and then slice it thinly with a mandolin or a very sharp cook's knife and add to salads – beetroot tastes great when eaten raw! Cut it into matchstick-size pieces and season with vinegar. You could also enhance the flavour by adding a little mustard oil and toasted mustard seeds.



Q Could you please suggest an alternative to anchovies? Also, is there a way of toning down the smell and flavour of the salty fish?

A. I like to use fish sauce as a substitute for anchovies in some recipes. The aroma is neutralised after adding lime juice, garlic, fresh chilli and sugar. If you do use anchovies in a dish, you could use the same seasoning. The mix of sweet, sour and pungent flavours tones down the saltiness and smell of the fish.



Andy's ingredient of the month

I've been using the nutrient-rich vegetable, Kohlrabi (which is part of the cabbage family) in quite a few dishes. I like to slice it thinly, mix it with orange, lemon and white vinegar dressing, and serve with sour cream and dill on the side. The vegetable, which looks a bit like turnip and cabbage, is low in cholesterol, rich in Vitamin C and promotes healthy digestion. Available at leading supermarkets.

Menu planner

Whip up a delicious meal with recipes from this issue

World cup game night get-together



Whatever team you're supporting, give it an English flavour with the Pommie punch mocktail, p45



Potted Stilton with rye and pumpkin seed crackers make for the perfect nibbles, p55



Easy to eat while engrossed with the game – Chicken and aubergine skewers with dukkah, p48



Cool off frazzled nervers with this light, seasonal Pineapple sorbet with fresh mango, p51

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs PHOTOS.COM

On test: Kitchen gadgets

We review some of the latest appliances on the market.



Lakeland Juicepresso

There's nothing better than a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice! This sturdy, high-end gadget is super-easy to use – you just peel the fruit and shove it into the nozzle, which then delivers the juice and pulp into seperate 1.4 litre jugs. There's also a pusher which you can use to slowly push the fruit down while juicing.

What we liked: The slow juicer extracts more juice compared to traditional juicers, while retaining nutrients, and uses a patented squeezing technology to thoroughly compress the flesh. Both soft and hard fruit and vegetables can be juiced. It takes approximately one minute to juice about three oranges, and extracted about 250ml of juice, slightly pulpy – just the way we like it! Not only was it pretty straightforward to use, it's a great way to consume more fresh fruit and vegetables, in a cooling, refreshing way just in time for summer! The compression technology means the pulp isn't a complete write-off as well, as it can be blended to make things like stocks later.

What we didn't like: The juicer is slightly noisy when in operation, and the nozzle is a bit of a challenge to clean as well.

To buy: Dhs2,300 at Lakeland.

KitchenAid Artisan Cordless Hand Blender

A common complaint of those cooks who buy cordless gadgets in order to save kitchen space is that they don't deliver on power. That's not the case with this sleek, stylish semi-pro machine that straddles the line between blender and low-end processor. The rechargeable batteries deliver the oomph for hours of prep, whether that's chopping nuts, creating smooth soups or whipping cream.

What we liked: The hand blender is pretty flexible with long and short stainless steel blending arms, four attachments to increase versatility and five speeds to cover a wide variety of tasks such as blending, chopping, whisking, shredding, frothing and puréeing. The battery life display is a great feature, and so is the automatic shut-down after 60 seconds of non-operation. We made a vegetable soup, fruit smoothie and a hot sauce from a pre-made chutney, and found the results quite good.

To buy: Dhs1,495 at Al Ghandi Electronics.





Tefal Actifry Family (1.5kg)

This fryer is a sound solution for those who want to cook food in big batches. Plus, who doesn't like a healthy alternative to traditional fries? Of course, you can also use it to cook vegetables and certain types of meat. The user-friendly fryer, now available in a bigger size, has an automatic start and stop timer, a non-stick ceramic coating, and is dishwasher compatible as well.

What we liked: While the appliance itself appears complex, working your way around it is fairly easy. The cooking process is a simple three-step procedure – put the chips into the fryer, pour a spoonful of oil (the spoon is supplied with the gadget) and hit start. The Actifry technology allows heat to be distributed evenly throughout the cooking process, and stirs food with the paddle. The fries turn out crispy, crunchy and tasty – not very different from the ones that you would actually deep fry. What we particularly love about the gadget, however, is that it comes with a useful recipe book – a fantastic bonus for avid cooks!

To buy: Dhs1,199 at all leading supermarkets.

Cuisinart yoghurt and cheese maker

Growing up, we were used to our mums and grandmums making yoghurt at home every night, so the concept of an appliance dedicated to making yoghurt was a bit alien. But, its usefulness was driven home after we woke up to perfectly formed yoghurt pots one morning after an overnight fermenting process!

What we liked: A simple, low-tech gadget, with a base, a transparent lid, small LED screen and just two buttons indicating ideal timings – one for yoghurt, one for cheese; although you can adjust timings manually as well – it's an easy addition to any kitchen, particularly once you've discovered just how simple it is to make your own yoghurt. Simply fill the cute little glass pots that are supplied with milk, add the bacteria culture (this can be just a spoon of existing yoghurt, or a store-bought live enzyme), turn it on, and voila, eight hours later, you have a wholesome, homemade batch of yoghurt ready – the machine provides a controlled environment with the ideal temperature for the yoghurt to be made. Also usable for making soft cheeses in separate pots with strainers that are provided, (this is slightly more complicated however, as you also need to add whey), this can be particularly handy for those with a dairy or lactose intolerance, or those who want to get creative with flavoured yoghurts.

What we didn't like: The price seems a bit steep for what you get for your money.

To buy: Dhs275 at Tavola.

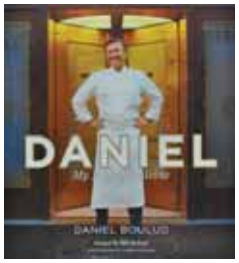


Reviews by DAVE REEDER, NICOLA MONTEATH, RUSHIKA BHATIA, SUDESHNA GHOSH.

What products would you like to see reviewed in the magazine? ✉ Tell us on feedback@bbcgoodfoodme.com or facebook.com/bbcgoodfoodme.

Culina-reads

Reviews of the latest cookbooks, food shows and mobile apps.



✳ ***Daniel: My French Cuisine*** by Daniel Boloud *(Grand Central Life & Style)*

When this iconic New York-based French chef decides to talk, foodies listen. And talk he does, in this book that opens a rare window into the workings of his eponymous restaurant, as well as his life and times at home. First of all, this isn't a cookbook. There is no way a home chef can attempt most of the recipes he shares here – unless they are seriously ambitious. What this book is, however, is the epitome of food porn. Page after page of jaw-dropping concoctions that display the refinement of French cuisine, and the complexity of techniques perfected by them over the ages – venison consommé with black truffle, anyone? – is contained in the first section, Recipes from Restaurant Daniel. Accompanied by personal notes from Daniel, the recipes can go up to 4 pages of this large coffee table-sized book – in a small typeface! The second section, Iconic Sessions, is authored by American author and Boloud fan and apprentice, Bill Buford, and gives us an insight into what goes into the creation of a dish in Daniel's kitchens – there's everything from intrigue to comedy in there – evoking the joys of cooking in beautiful prose. The third and last section focuses on food from four different regions of France that are Daniel's personal recipes – slightly more achievable, but by no means a 20-minute supper! Savour this book as you would a luxury accessory, to find inspiration and delight within its pages.

Dhs266, at Jashanmal Bookstores



✳ ***Sam Stern's cookery course*** *(Quadrille publishing)*

A veritable bible for beginner cooks (although there's plenty of useful advice and knowhow in here for experienced chefs too), this book is literally, as the name suggests, a complete cooking course within its 250 or so pages. Starting at the beginning – with how to set up a kitchen from scratch, including essential tools and rules – the book goes on to cover a variety of recipes, some of them with follow-up recipes that are slightly more challenging (for example, if you've mastered a rough beef stew, on the next page you'll find a beef bourguignon that you are encouraged to try). Punctuated with snippets on everything from how to choose and work with beef, to nutrition tips, step-by-step guides, time-saving advice, what dish and ingredients go with what, and lots more, the book is packed with useful information. The attractive, modern and fun design makes it a visual treat too – it's a must-have for anyone who cooks.

Dhs99, available at Jashanmal bookstores



✳ ***Quick cook vegetarian*** by Sunil Vijaykar *(Hamlyn)*

Thinking about getting more vegetarian food in your diet? This smart paperback carries not just one or two, but three recipes for each dish, using the same combination of ingredients, for a 10-minute, 20-minute, or 30-minute meal each. So, for example, you could make a tomato and aubergine pappardelle one day (30 mins), a tomato, aubergine and mozzarella pizza another (10 mins), and a grilled aubergine, tomato and basil salad (20 mins) for lunch the next day. It's not only good for having lots of options to choose from, but also to use up leftover ingredients. The recipes are divided into sections titled Snacks and light bites; Substantial soups and salads; Speedy midweek meals; Special occasions; and Dessert in a dash, and the book also contains useful info on quick cooking techniques and flavourings. On the downside, some of the recipes – especially the quicker ones – recommend using a lot of store-bough, processed ingredients, which we always recommend people use sparingly. But with so many vegetarian ideas at your fingertips (think beer battered halloumi!), you won't miss meat at all.

Dhs95, at Jashanmal bookstores

On my bookshelf. . .



✳ **We ask the pros to tell us about the cookbook they can't live without.**

Burton George, Exercutive Pastry Chef, The St. Regis Abu Dhabi

"I'm currently reading Modernist cuisine vol.6 – it is kind of a kitchen bible you can say, as it covers different techniques of cooking, from molecular, gastronomy to sous vide. It also talks about different ingredients and their water and fat content, which helps chefs to balance them in a dish and mix and match the food for better combinations."

Watch this:



✳ **East Bites West**

Nat Geo People HD

This show sees Malaysian chef Wan travelling in his blue caravan across South England, to educate people on Eastern ingredients and cooking techniques. In each episode, Wan cooks in people's home kitchens, showing them how to make low-cost and healthy Asian dishes that taste great, as well as goes head to head with a local chef with the cook-off winner being determined by a public taste test.

Download this:



✳ **Be the chef,**

Free for iPhone and iPad

Do you often find yourself staring at the fridge wondering what to cook for the evening's supper? We do! Enter, this lovely little app, which thoughtfully provides ideas and inspiration for what to cook, rather than just a bunch of recipes. So, you choose a few ingredients from a visual list on the app, and it then pulls together a selection of recipes from all over the internet. Beautifully designed and interactive, the app also carries featured ideas (for when you're really stuck), and lets you create your own recipes.

Text SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED, ANAS CHERUR

Tried & tasted

Each month, we review two of the city's top tables.

New York-style restaurants



#steak #volcanic stone #cookyourownfood

Where: Soho Bar & Grill

What's it like: Located in the charming, fairy light-adorned alfresco haven that is Century Village, this achingly hip restaurant recreates a little slice of New York in Dubai. With exposed concrete walls and pillars made from packing crates, the interiors are trendy, but as long as the weather allows, I'd opt for the outdoor terrace overlooking a small fountain and pond that is home to a couple of curious turtles. The menu is a celebration of meat and says as much – if the wrought iron cow greeting guests at the entrance wasn't enough of an indication! – but we were impressed with the variety and quality of non-beef offerings. Sharing a plate of Soho wings – tender smoked chicken wings coated with a delicious homemade sauce – and steak chips for starters, we not only polished everything off, but were licking our fingers after! For mains, my partner opted for the Chicken Vera Cruz, a Mexican-inspired chicken breast served with a salsa topping and grilled asparagus. I had my mind made up well before going there, that I would cook my own steak – their latest offering is a raw steak served at the table on a steaming hot volcanic stone slab, so one can cook it according to personal taste. This is like sizzler, the 2.0 version – the stone can stay hot for over 25 minutes, and, while first-timers can get it wrong (it's recommended to cut the steak into small pieces so they cook faster, and my first bit was a bit more cooked than I usually like), the staff are happy to help, and once you get the hang of it, it's a lot of fun. Served with two sides of potatoes, vegetables, and a sauce – a mushroom sauce in my case, which I found a bit too drowned in cream – this is theatricality of food and taste all rolled into one. Dessert is, in true American fashion, hearty and heavy, with options including cheesecake and our pick, a rich chocolate pudding with vanilla ice cream. If you're looking for good steaks at affordable prices, and a licensed restaurant that is relaxed and unpretentious – and God knows that's a rarity in Dubai! – then look no further.

Best for: A chilled-out meal with friends

If you want to go: Around Dhs350 for three course meal for two (without drinks), call 04-2868520.

- Sudeshna Ghosh



#stylishscallops #rustic

Where: Chinwaggery + Soul Bar, Lounge & Restaurant, Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Beach

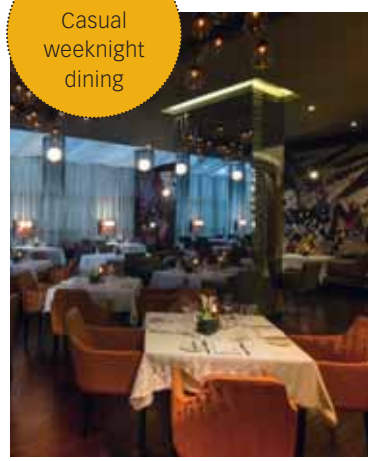
What's it like: First of all, I'd like to point out this restaurant isn't just another steakhouse. It's a New York-style brasserie which offers premium cuts of meat, as well as seafood. Here you can sit at the bar and lounge lit up with wine glass-style lighting fixtures, or dine indoors and admire the graffiti feature wall which adds an artsy touch to the otherwise elegant décor. Both options were enticing, but we sat on the pool terrace to make the most out of alfresco dining – while we still could!

It's easy picking from the concise, newly revamped menu. My partner chose a trio of foie gras, which showcased a torched foie gras with a sweet burnt crust, and raw and sautéed liver which was smeared over crisp brioche with rhubarb chutney. I chose scallops rockerfeller which had wonderfully textured scallops topped with crumbs, and served in the shell on a bed of cream, spinach and beef bacon bits. The dish was complemented by a juicy red pepper coulis which was mildly spicy. Dutch Veal lamb chop was the way to go to for mains, but I'd imagined the chop to be a way smaller portion than it was – the 450g chop served with baby carrots, a truffle jus that lingered around my palate, and creamy mushroom-stuffed roulade (similar to an enchilada), was absolutely divine nonetheless. My partner opted for a medium rare USDA Black Angus T-bone – cooked to perfection – with an innovative, slightly syrupy bone marrow bordelaise sauce and macaroni and cheese as a side. Mains are served in generous portions and can be shared as well. After such a heavy meal, sharing a platter of mini desserts of strawberry macaron, dense and chocolate-y eggless cake, and a creamy pistachio cream, which tasted like a toffee marzipan, was perfect.

If you want to go: Around Dhs600 for three-course meal for two (without drinks). Call 04-4498888.

- Nicola Monteath

Best for: Casual weeknight dining

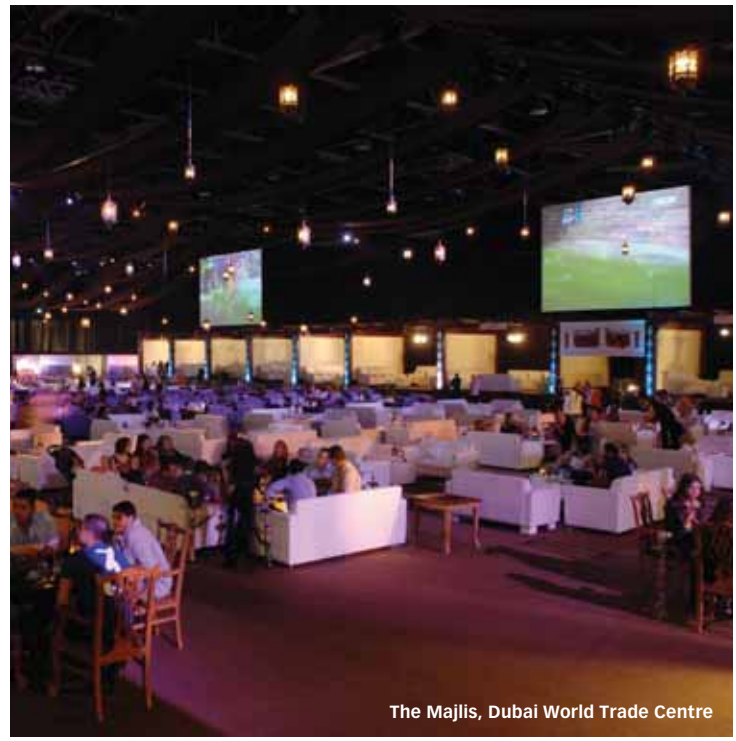




Photographs SUPPLIED and by REVIEWERS

Flavours of the month

Our pick of the best restaurant offers, promotions and deals this month.


The Majlis, Dubai World Trade Centre

RAMADAN SPECIALS


Urban Kitchen, Dusit Thani Abu Dhabi

✶ Urban Kitchen, Dusit Thani Abu Dhabi

Indulge in an array of international and Arabic dishes including shoukaf (lamb fillet cubes with onions), Moroccan tagine chicken with apricots and Lebenese lomia bel labneh (green beans with a yoghurt sauce). The restaurant will also be serving Thai specialties, to offer something for all palates.
From Dhs150 per person. Call 02-6988888.

✶ Kitchen 6, JW Marriott Marquis Dubai

Take your family for an Iftar buffet they are sure to remember. The restaurant features six live cooking stations as well as Middle Eastern grills, roasts, Indian dishes and a selection of organic foods. Once done, treat yourself to a mouthwatering selection of desserts.
Dhs195 per person, call 04-4143000.

✶ 3in1, Vida Downtown Dubai

Enjoy a sumptuous buffet selection of international and Arabic dishes such as fattoush, mixed grills, and chicken molokhia, as you dine at this relaxed restaurant overlooking the hotel's swimming pool. An oriental band will liven up your dining experience as you catch up with friends.
Dhs170 per person, call 04-4285923.

FIFA WORLD CUP OFFERS

✶ The Majlis, Dubai World Trade Centre

Gather your friends and head to this massive venue to watch the World cup matches on large screens. The Majlis, located at Sheikh Saeed Hall 3, boasts one of the largest indoor shisha lounges in the city, promising an electric atmosphere. Their menu features dishes like shawarmas and toffee date pudding. Iftar and Suhoor offerings will also be available during Ramadan.
From Dhs200 per table, call 04-3086322.

✶ Voda Bar, Jumeirah Zabeel Saray

Make this your go-to destination for football-themed nibbles and refreshing beverages, when the games are on. Watch the matches on the giant projector screens or four surrounding screens as you cheer on your favourite team.
Call 04-4530444.

✶ The Huddle Sports Bar and Grill, Citymax Hotel Al Barsha

Spend Dhs100 and get Dhs30 back on your next visit, when you head to this sports bar and grill during the World Cup season. The menu features a selection of delicious pub grub items such as burgers and platters, as well as cocktails and other beverages.
A la carte menu, call 04-4098000.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED



✳ Meaty morsels

The Butcher's brunch at West 14th on Palm Jumeirah is the place to visit for cold and hot platters to share, as well as mains including succulent lamb chops, Angus striploin, tuna steak and other delightful options. Don't forget to leave space for desserts!
Fridays and Saturdays, from Dhs350. Call 04-4477601.

✳ Daddy's Day out

Celebrate Father's Day on June 15 by treating dad to a special barbecue at Infini Pool Lounge, Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach. Along with grills, you and your father can also enjoy hot and cold mezze, mocktails and sheesha.
June 12-15, Dhs80 per person inclusive of one house beverage. Call 04-4484848.

✳ All American nosh

Flavours at The Sheraton Abu Dhabi transforms into a 50s-style dinner – complete with a juke box – for their American food feast theme night on Monday. Try Reuben sandwiches, southern fried chicken with curly fries, hot dogs and burgers, as well as meatloaf from the widespread buffet. Finish with apple pie and *cotton candy for dessert. Dhs99 per person. Call 02-6773333.*

✳ Italian brekkie

Popular café, restaurant and foodshop from celebrity chef Antonio Carluccio, Carluccio's, have launched a new breakfast menu at their Dubai and Abu Dhabi outlets. Begin the day with an appetising frittata, crepe, or eggs benedict and Florentine made from free range eggs, which are just some of the menu options.
Available daily, call 02-6412231 or 04-4341320.

✳ Revisiting the classics

Move over brunch, a gourmet degustation menu is the way forward for weekend daytime dining. Wheeler's of St James have introduced a new eight-course degustation menu inspired by Marco Pierre White – savour British favourites such as home-cured lemon pepper salmon, grilled tenderloin of beef with whipped potato, wild mushrooms and roast garlic jus, as well as platters of fresh oysters, king prawns and crab legs.
Fridays and Saturdays from 12-5pm, from Dhs225 per person. call 04-3860899.

✳ Some Dim sum?

Calling all dim sum lovers! Chop Suey at The Beach Park Plaza Mall have launched Yum Cha Fridays, where diners can feast on fried and steamed vegetable, seafood, chicken and meat dim sums, as well as soup, dessert, tea and soft drinks for a value-for-money price.
Every Friday, Dhs80 per person. Call 04-3442212.



✳ Brunch, New Orleans-style

Cravin' Cajun, which gained instant popularity for its good-value, authentic Cajun cuisine offerings after opening at the Novotel Al Barsha, has now joined the Saturday brunch brigade. Expect Louisiana classics like crab cakes and Jambalaya from the hot buffet, while a lavish array of French-inspired offerings like oysters, cold cuts, and cured meats, as well as signature cocktails complete the mix, with the in-house jazz band adding atmosphere.
From Dhs195 per person, call 04-3049000.

✳ Sushi saga

Blue Jade, The Ritz-Carlton Dubai, is the place to dine at for the Sushi-licious theme night this summer. Relish everything from California rolls to prawn nigiri, umagi and salmon maki – all complemented by handcrafted beverages.
Available daily until September, Dhs100 per person, call 04-3186150.



✳ Weekend indulgences



The glamorous, neon-lit, crystal-adorned Dubai outpost of French-Indian restaurant Les Portes des Indes from London, which opened recently at The Address Dubai Mall, has introduced a new brunch available on both Fridays and Saturdays. Their innovative, contemporary Indian menu offerings – think Tandoori seared foie gras, duck with tamarind sauce, and lamb chops with garam masala – is inspired by the cuisine of Pondicherry, but the menu offerings are varied. The brunch features a live chaat station, plus an à la carte menu of the signature dishes, washed down by creative cocktails – you can even get hands-on with making your own with the mixologist if you want.
From Dhs295 per person, call 04-4388610. Live jazz performances are available on Saturdays.



The Doha diaries

Our Doha-based columnist has her finger on the pulse of the city's foodie scene.

Cheap eats

Let's face it, in Doha, we are spoiled for choice when it comes to five star dining. But sometimes, all you want is a tasty, wallet friendly meal. Here are a few of my favorite tried and tested places you may never have heard of – all serving up excellent food at very reasonable prices.

Playstation Cafeteria and Restaurant: Contrary to its name, this gem is actually a Chinese restaurant serving up amazing dumplings and noodles. The staff's language skills are basic, the décor eclectic, and the menu comes in a cover meant for another restaurant, but this is the real deal. Try the salt and pepper mushrooms and a selection of dumplings. *Located in Museum Street (behind National Museum).*

The Garden Village: Placed inauspiciously in a strip mall facing a carpark, this Indian restaurant offers the typical favorites and some surprises like beef with coconut. My favorite is the Friday 'brunch' which is a selection of vegetarian curries, sides and rice served on a banana leaf. *Opposite Nissan Garage (near TV Roundabout), Bin Omran. Tel: +974 4488 5115.*

Thai Smile: Fresh, with a touch of real spice and served (and home delivered) with a smile (get it?) – what's not to love about a place that has Pad Thai for QR28? Thai Smile serves up a fiery green papaya salad, satays, noodles and of course the full selection of green, red and yellow curries from two locations. *Al Bidda Park and Um Guwallinia. Tel: +974 4431 6466.*

Spicy Pickle: In a city where a sandwich often means tomato and cheese on white bread with mayonnaise, this newcomer is a welcome addition to the fast food scene here. On offer is some of the freshest food to be found in the city – salads, wraps, sandwiches and flatbreads which are served with a small side salad and of course, a spicy pickle. *The Gate Mall. Tel: +974 4407 7118.*

Nepalese Kitchen: If Nepalese cuisine has any one thing going for it, it's the momo. These are steamed dumplings stuffed with meat or vegetables served with a spicy sauce. The other unheralded highlight of this place is thukpa – a clear noodle soup, which comes vegetarian or with prawns, beef or chicken. *Opposite Jaidah Tower, Al Asmakh area. Tel: +974 7758 4376.*

Mr Gyros: The Greeks have given us many great things – art, the Olympics, democracy... They have also given us gyros (pronounced 'heros') – that dish of marinated and sliced meat roasted on a vertical spit served in a sandwich. This is the only place I know in Doha serving the Greek fast food creation. You can have chicken lamb or beef served in the flatbread with a delicious garlicky sauce. Like all great budget dining experiences in Doha, this is located inside a petrol station but has diner-style seating for up to 30 people. *Al Jazeera Petrol Station, Salwa Road. Tel: +974 4444 0033.*

- Rachel Morris is a Qatar-based writer and food blogger (lifeonthewedge.net).

The latest food news and happenings in the city.

Frozen treats



Cool down with a selection of fruit sorbets this summer, at Kufic Lounge, The Torch Doha, and try the home-made iced dessert made from fresh, seasonal fruits such as pomegranate, watermelon and nectarine.
Available daily, call +974 4446 5600.

Game night

Get ready for World Cup 2014 with the ultimate Kick-Off Beach party at Champions Sports Bar and Restaurant, West End - Renaissance Doha City Center Hotel. Feast on braised Angus beef ribs or teriyaki salmon, as you join in the celebrations, watch the opening ceremony on large screens and dance away to Brazilian tunes.
On June 12, QR 60 for entry and one free house beverage. Call +974 4419 6100.



Sweet delights

Take the stress out of preparing traditional desserts at home this Ramadan, and simply order in from Kunafa Albisana at Katara Cultural Village. You can choose from kunafa with Jordanian Nabulsi cheese, Aesh El Saray (bread pudding with rose water, pistachio and homemade fresh cream) and Moholabiya, to name just a few of their delicious options.
Available during Ramadan, call +974 4408 1200.

Ramadan dining

Dine at the Sultan Tent at W Doha this Ramadan to enjoy Iftar and Suhoor with the family. The buffet spread features an extended Arabic buffet, and saj, pasta, Indian and South American dishes tossed up at live cooking stations. A shisha menu is also available.
From QR220 per person, call +974 4453 5353.

Additional text NICOLA MONTEATH | Photos SUPPLIED

Home Cooking

Inspiring recipes for easy everyday meals and stylish weekend entertaining

Vintage vanilla fudge, recipe p55

IN THIS SECTION



✳ Speedy suppers from store-cupboard staples, **P18**



✳ Give pasta a gourmet twist, **P35**



✳ Summer never tasted this good! **P51**

Make it tonight

Get your kitchen in order and use up all those half-empty packets and jars with these new ideas for simple suppers. Recipes REN BEHAN
Photographs SAM STOWELL



Lentil & sweet potato curry

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy ❄ V

Fibre | Vit C | Iron | 4 of 5-a-day

Use up spices, lentils and chickpeas

2 tbsp vegetable or olive oil
1 red onion, chopped
1 tsp each cumin and mustard seeds (any colour)
1 tbsp medium curry powder
100g red or green lentils, or a mixture
2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
500ml vegetable stock
400g can chopped tomatoes
400g can chickpeas, drained
¼ small pack coriander (optional), natural yoghurt and naan bread, to serve

1 Heat the oil in a large pan, add the onion and cook for a few mins until softened. Add the spices and cook for 1 min more, then stir in the lentils, sweet potatoes, stock and chopped tomatoes.
2 Bring to the boil, then cover and simmer for 20 mins until the lentils and sweet potatoes are tender. Add the chickpeas, then heat through.
3 Season, sprinkle with coriander, if you like, and serve with seasoned yogurt and naan bread.

PER SERVING 613 cals, protein 27g, carbs 91g, fat 18g, sat fat 2g, fibre 16g, sugar 21g, salt 1.8g



Tomato & rice soup

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 35 MINS Easy ❄ V Low fat 2 of 5-a-day

2 tsp olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, finely chopped
1 celery stick, finely chopped
1 tbsp golden caster sugar
2 tbsp vinegar (white, red or balsamic)
1 tbsp tomato purée
400g can chopped tomatoes or passata
1l vegetable stock made with 2 cubes
140g rice (long-grain, basmati, wild, brown or a mixture)
A small handful of parsley, leaves only, chopped, and a few dollops of pesto, to serve (optional)

1 Heat the oil in a large saucepan and add the onion, carrot and celery, then cook gently until softened. Add the sugar and vinegar, cook for 1 min, then stir through the tomato purée. Add the chopped tomatoes or passata, the vegetable stock, and any brown rice, if using, then cover and simmer for 10 mins. If you are using wild rice, add this and simmer for 10 mins more. Finally, add any white rice you're using, and simmer for a final 10 mins until the rice is tender.
2 Just before serving, sprinkle over some chopped parsley and season to taste. Divide into bowls and add a swirl of pesto to each, if you like.

PER SERVING 213 kcals, protein 6g, carbs 39g, fat 3g, sat fat 1g, fibre 4g, sugar 13g, salt 1.6g



Use up bulghur wheat, couscous, nuts and dried fruit

Fruity tabbouleh with feta

SERVES 4 ● PREP 40 MINS ● NO COOK

Easy Folate Fibre Iron 1 of 5-a-day

100g bulghur wheat
6 tbsp olive oil
100g couscous
200g mixed shelled nuts, roughly chopped (any mixture of almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecans or pistachios)
200g mixed dried fruit, large fruit chopped (any mixture of raisins, sultanas, apricots, dates and cranberries)
Zest and juice of 2 lemons
Small pack each of mint and flat-leaf parsley, leaves roughly chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
100g feta, crumbled
Grilled lamb chops, to serve (optional)

1 Boil the kettle. Put the bulghur wheat in a sieve and rinse with cold water until the water runs clear. Drain well and transfer to a mixing bowl. Pour over 200ml boiling water and 1 tbsp olive oil, cover with a plate and leave to soak for 30 mins. Meanwhile, put the couscous into a second mixing bowl with 1 tbsp olive oil, just cover with boiling water, then cover with a plate and leave to stand for 5-10 mins.
2 Once the bulghur wheat and couscous are ready, put them in a mixing bowl and fluff up the grains with a fork. Stir through the nuts and dried fruit, too.
3 Whisk together the lemon zest and juice, herbs, remaining olive oil and the garlic. Pour over the grains, nuts and fruit, and stir everything together well with some seasoning. Transfer to a serving plate, scatter with the crumbled feta, and serve with grilled lamb chops, if you like.

PER SERVING 829 kcals, protein 23g, carbs 72g, fat 50g, sat fat 10g, fibre 7g, sugar 35g, salt 1.4g >>



Macaroni cheese with bacon & pine nuts

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 40 MINS Easy Calcium

50g pine nuts
4 slices pancetta or turkey bacon, chopped
400g macaroni or any short pasta
300ml pot double cream
200ml tub crème fraîche
200g Gruyère or cheddar, grated
2 tsp Dijon mustard
Green salad, to serve (optional)

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Put the pine nuts in a dry frying pan, gently toast for 2-3 mins, then tip onto a plate. In the same pan, add the pancetta or bacon and cook for a few mins until crisp.
2 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil and cook the pasta following pack instructions until al dente. Drain, reserving a ladleful of the pasta cooking water for later.
3 Meanwhile, put the double cream, crème fraîche and half the cheese in a saucepan, stir together and gently warm through until the cheese has melted. Take off the heat, stir in the mustard and some seasoning to taste.
3 Tip the drained pasta into a large baking dish and stir in the cheese sauce, adding some of the pasta cooking water if it looks a little dry. Sprinkle the toasted pine nuts and cooked pancetta over the top, then scatter over the remaining cheese. Bake for 20 mins until the top is golden and bubbling, then serve with a salad, if you like.

PER SERVING 886 kcals, protein 26g, carbs 60g, fat 60g, sat fat 34g, fibre 3g, sugar 4g, salt 1.4g



Salmon with sesame, soy & ginger noodles

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy Omega-3

4 tbsp dark, light, low-salt (or a mixture) soy sauce
4 tbsp rice wine or mirin
1 stem ginger ball, finely chopped, plus 2 tbsp syrup from the jar
1 garlic clove, crushed
2 salmon fillets
140g any noodles
2 tbsp sesame seeds
2 spring onions, chopped

1 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. In a small jug, whisk together the soy, rice wine or mirin, stem ginger and syrup, and garlic. Line a roasting tin with baking parchment and put the salmon in it. Pour over half the sauce, then bake for 15 mins until the salmon is cooked through.
2 Meanwhile, bring a large pan of water to the boil. Add the noodles and cook following pack instructions, then drain well.
3 In a small frying pan, lightly toast the sesame seeds for 1 min, then add to the cooked noodles (reserving a sprinkle for the top). Pour the remaining sauce over the noodles, plus any from the roasting tin, and toss together. Serve with the salmon, scattered with the chopped spring onions and remaining sesame seeds.

PER SERVING 749 kcals, protein 42g, carbs 78g, fat 27g, sat fat 5g, fibre 4g, sugar 27g, salt 4.0g GF

The most delicious Turkish chicken...

Banvit



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حلال
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Food to stop you flagging

The 3pm slump often has us reaching for the chocolate. But eat the right food at the right time and you'll feel full for longer.



Lemon chicken with spring veg noodles

SERVES 2 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 15 MINS Easy Low fat Iron Vit C Superhealthy

It's best to make your own stir-fry sauce as most ready-made ones contain a large amount of sweeteners that will raise your blood sugar, then leave you feeling fatigued half an hour later

1 tbsp sunflower oil
2 skinless chicken breasts, cut into strips
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
1 tbsp caster sugar
2 tsp grated ginger
2 tsp cornflour
125g pack or 2 sheets medium dried egg noodles
200g frozen pea and bean mix
4 spring onions, sliced
1 tbsp roasted cashews

1 Heat the oil in a non-stick pan, then fry the chicken for 5 mins until almost cooked. Tip onto a plate. Pour 250ml water into the pan with the lemon zest and juice, sugar and ginger. In a bowl, mix the cornflour with a little water until smooth, then whisk into the pan. Bring to the boil, stirring, then add the chicken to the sauce. Reduce the heat. Bubble for a few mins until the chicken is cooked and the sauce thickened.
2 Meanwhile, cook the noodles and veg together in boiling water for 4 mins, then drain. Toss together the chicken, noodles, veg and spring onions. Serve scattered with cashews.

PER SERVING 553 kcals, protein 47g, carbs 69g, fat 12g, sat fat 2g, fibre 6g, sugar 12g, salt 1.1g



Lemon & coriander hummous

SERVES 6 ● PREP 5 MINS ● NO COOK

Easy V

The fibre and protein in half a cup of hummous will give you the same energy boost as a bread roll.

2 x 400g cans chickpeas in water, drained
2 garlic cloves, crushed
3 tbsp Greek yoghurt
3 tbsp tahini paste
3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
Zest and juice of 2 lemons
20g pack coriander

1 Put everything but the coriander into a food processor, then whizz to a fairly smooth mix. Scrape down the sides of the processor if you need to.
2 Season the houmous generously, then add the coriander and pulse until roughly chopped. Spoon into a serving bowl, drizzle with olive oil, then serve.

PER SERVING 179 kcals, protein 7g, carbs 13g, fat 11g, sat fat 2g, fibre 6g, sugar 1g, salt 0.12g

Salmon, avocado & cucumber salad

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 6-8 MINS Easy

Omega-3 Vit C 3 of 5-a-day Superhealthy

This low-carb, high protein lunch will boost your energy levels for longer

4 skinless salmon fillets, about 100g each
3 avocados
1 cucumber
400g bag mixed salad leaves
FOR THE DRESSING
4 tbsp mint, chopped
Juice 2 limes, plus zest 1
2 tsp clear honey
3 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for the salmon

1 Season salmon, then rub with oil. Mix the dressing ingredients together. Halve, stone, peel and slice the avocados. Halve and quarter the cucumber lengthways, then cut into slices. Divide salad, avocado and cucumber between 4 plates, then drizzle with half the dressing.
2 Heat a non-stick pan. Add the salmon and fry for 3-4 mins on each side until crisp, but still moist inside. Put a salmon fillet on top of each salad and drizzle over the remaining dressing. Serve warm.

PER SERVING 458 kcals, protein 23g, carbs 7g, fat 38g, sat fat 6g, fibre 4g, sugar 5g, salt 0.14g >>



Best-ever chunky guacamole

SERVES 8 ● PREP 10 MINS ● NO COOK

Easy V 1 of 5-a-day Superhealthy

Mono-unsaturated fats in avocado boost the effectiveness of blood-sugar-balancing insulin.

1 large ripe tomato
3 avocados, very ripe but not bruised
Juice 1 large lime
Handful of coriander, leaves and stalks chopped, plus a few leaves roughly chopped, to serve
1 small red onion, finely chopped
1 chilli, red or green, deseeded and finely chopped

1 Use a large knife to finely chop the tomato to a pulp, then tip into a bowl. Halve and stone the avocados (saving a stone) and use a spoon to scoop out the flesh into the bowl with the tomato.
2 Tip the other ingredients into the bowl, then season. Use a whisk to roughly mash everything together. If not serving straight away, sit a stone in the guacamole (this stops it going brown), cover with cling film and chill until needed. Scatter with the coriander, then serve with tortilla chips.

PER SERVING 103 kcals, protein 1g, carbs 2g, fat 10g, sat fat 1g, fibre 2g, sugar 0g, salt 0.01g



Salmon rarebit

SERVES 1 EASILY DOUBLED ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 7 MINS Easy

This dish provides around 20 per cent of the recommended daily amount of iron, which makes it a great choice for promoting energy levels. Canned salmon is not much more expensive than tuna, but contains brain-boosting omega-3 fats

Sliced granary bread (or a wholegrain bread of your choice)
100g canned salmon, drained and flaked
1-2 spring onions, thinly sliced
2 tbsp cottage cheese
1 tsp grated horseradish (optional)
1 tbsp red Leicester, grated
40g watercress and spinach salad, to serve

1 Heat grill to high. Toast the bread lightly on both sides.
2 Mix the salmon and spring onions together and season with pepper only. Spread onto the bread. Mix together the cottage cheese, horseradish (if using) and cheese. Spoon on top of the salmon.
3 Grill on a high shelf for 1 min, then lower the shelf and continue to grill for a further 3-4 mins, or until the topping starts to brown. Serve straight away with a watercress and spinach salad.

PER SERVING 368 kcals, protein 35g, carbs 19g, fat 15g, sat fat 6g, fibre 2g, sugar 4g, salt 1.1g



Peach & banana smoothie

MAKES 1 LITRE (SERVES 4)

● PREP 5 MINS ● NO COOK Easy

Low fat Vit C 2 of 5-a-day Superhealthy

Fruit-based snacks are great for an immediate energy boost, but as they raise your blood sugar very quickly a crash will follow. Peaches, blueberries and plums rank low on the glycaemic index though, so they won't trigger blood sugar spikes.

2 peaches, halved and stone removed
1 banana
500ml peach juice
4 ice cubes

Peel the peaches, if you want, then cut the flesh into chunks. Peel and chop the banana. Put all the ingredients into a food processor or blender, then process until smooth and thick. Keep in the fridge and use the day you make it.

PER SERVING 107 kcals, protein 1g, carbs 26g, fat 1g, sat fat none, fibre 2g, sugar 26g, salt 0.04g GF

Make veg the star

You'll make these meat-free recipes again and again, because they're guaranteed to be a hit with family and friends.

Photographs DAVID MUNNS

Vegetarian mains everyone will love



Green salad with olive dressing, recipe p28

Garlic chilli focaccia, recipe p28

Melanzane parmigiana, recipe p28

Food styling JENNIFER JOYCE | Styling SUE ROWLANDS | Wine notes SARAH JANE EVANS MW



Vegetable vegan biriyani with carrot salad, recipe p28



Melanzane parmigiana

SERVES 4-6 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 25 MINS

A little effort | V | Low cal | Folate | Fibre | Vit C | 3 of 5-a-day

2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for brushing
3 garlic cloves, crushed
3 thyme sprigs
8 large sage leaves, finely chopped
4 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
3 tbsp red wine vinegar
3 tbsp golden caster or granulated sugar
6 large aubergines, sliced lengthways as thinly as you can
100g vegetarian-style Parmesan, finely grated
85g white breadcrumbs
50g pine nuts
2 x 125g balls vegetarian-style mozzarella, torn into small chunks
Handful of basil leaves

1 Heat the oil in a large frying pan (or wide saucepan), add the garlic, thyme and sage, and cook gently for a few mins. Tip in the tomatoes, vinegar and sugar, and gently simmer for 20-25 mins until thickened a little.

2 Meanwhile, heat a griddle (or frying) pan. Brush the aubergine slices on both sides with olive oil, then griddle in batches. You want each slice softened and slightly charred, so don't have the heat too high or the aubergine will char before softening. Remove to a plate as you go.

3 In a large baking dish, spread a little of the tomato sauce over the base. Mix 25g of the Parmesan with the breadcrumbs and pine nuts, and set aside. Top the sauce with a layer or two of aubergine slices, then season well. Spoon over a bit more sauce, then scatter over some mozzarella, Parmesan and basil leaves. Repeat, layering up – and finishtwith the last of the tomato sauce. Scatter over the cheesy breadcrumbs and chill for up to 24 hrs, or bake straight away.

4 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Bake for 30-40 mins until the top is crisp and golden, and the tomato sauce bubbling. Rest for 10 mins, then scatter with basil leaves and serve with salad and focaccia (recipes, right).

PER SERVING (6) 481 kcals, protein 24g, carbs 37g, fat 27g, sat fat 11g, fibre 17g, sugar 25g, salt 1.3g

Green salad with olive dressing

SERVES 6 ● PREP 15 MINS ● NO COOK

Easy | V | Low fat | 1 of 5-a-day | Good for you

Finely chop **1 small red onion** and **50g green olives**. Whisk **2 tbsp olive oil**, **2 tbsp red wine vinegar** and **2 tsp golden caster sugar**, then stir in the olives and onion. Season. Tip **6 big handfuls mixed green leaves** into a bowl – pick a bag with different flavours and textures; a bit of crunch works well with the Melanzane parmigiana. Drizzle the olive dressing over and toss gently to coat.

PER SERVING 66 kcals, protein 1g, carbs 3g, fat 5g, sat fat 1g, fibre 1g, sugar 3g, salt 0.3g

Garlic chilli focaccia

SERVES 6 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 10-15 mins

Easy | V

Finely chop **1 small bunch flat-leaf parsley** and **1 big red chilli** (seeds in or out, up to you), crush **4 garlic cloves** and mash into **100g softened butter**. Season well and spread over 1 large focaccia loaf. Bake on baking sheets at 200C/180C fan for 10-15 mins until hot and crisping.

PER SERVING 253 kcals, protein 4g, carbs 20g, fat 18g, sat fat 9g, fibre 2g, sugar 2g, salt 0.8g



Vegetable vegan biriyani with carrot salad

SERVES 8 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 40 MINS

Easy | V | Low cal | Fibre | Vit C | Iron | 2 of 5-a-day | Good for you

400g basmati rice
Pinch saffron threads (optional)
2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 cauliflower, cut into florets
2 potatoes, cut into chunks
100g red lentils
100g French beans, trimmed and cut in half
Handful of curry leaves
2 handfuls of frozen peas
Small bunch of coriander
50g roasted cashew nuts, roughly chopped
Poppadoms and naan bread, to serve
FOR THE PASTE
1 large onion, roughly chopped
Large piece ginger, roughly chopped
5 garlic cloves
2 tsp curry powder
1 tsp ground cumin
2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 small green chilli
FOR THE CARROT SALAD
4 carrots
Pinch of golden caster sugar
Squeeze lemon juice
Handful cashew nuts, roughly chopped
Handful coriander leaves, roughly chopped
Thumb-sized piece ginger, shredded into matchsticks
1 tsp cumin seeds, toasted

1 Soak the rice for 30 mins, then rinse in several changes of water until it runs clear. Cover with about 1 cm water, add the saffron (if using), cover the pan, bring to the boil, stir once, then turn off the heat. Leave for 10 mins, covered, then stir again and leave to stand, covered.

2 To make the paste, blitz all the ingredients together in a food processor. Heat the oil in a saucepan. Tip in the paste, then add the cauliflower and potatoes. Cook in the paste to colour, then add the lentils and green beans, and cover with about 400ml water. Add the curry leaves, season with salt, cover with a lid and simmer for 20 mins until the lentils and vegetables are tender Add the peas for the last 2 mins to defrost. Stir the rice through the curry until completely mixed and hot, then spoon onto a platter and scatter with coriander and cashews.

3 For the carrot salad, use a peeler to shave the carrots into ribbons. Sprinkle with the |sugar and dress with the lemon juice, then toss with the other ingredients. Serve the biryani on a large platter for everyone to help themselves, with the carrot salad on the side, poppadoms for any vegans and naan bread for the vegetarians.

PER SERVING 424 kcals, protein 14g, carbs 60g, fat 13g, sat fat 2g, fibre 7g, sugar 9g, salt 0.2g

Sesame halloumi parcels with sweet potato tahini, mash & chopped herb salad

SERVES 6 ● PREP 40 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy V Fibre Vit C 2 of 5-a-day

FOR THE HALLOUMI PARCELS
1 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for brushing
1 tbsp tahini
1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
Handful of parsley, chopped
zest 1 lemon (use the juice in the salad)
2 x 250g packs halloumi, each cut into 12 slices
6 sheets filo pastry
50g sesame seeds
1 egg, beaten
FOR THE MASH
650g (about 4) sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
2 tbsp tahini
4 tbsp olive oil
FOR THE SALAD
Juice 1 lemon
1 tbsp clear honey
5 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
Small bunch each of mint, parsley and dill, all roughly chopped
Handful cherry tomatoes, halved
½ cucumber, seeds removed, chopped
Small handful black olives, roughly chopped

1 To make the halloumi parcels, heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Grease 2 baking trays with oil. In a bowl, mix the tahini, olive oil, chilli, parsley and lemon zest. Add the halloumi and toss everything well to coat – don't worry if the halloumi breaks up a little.

2 Cut the filo sheets in half so that you have 12 squares – work with 2 at a time and keep the remaining pastry covered with a damp tea towel or cling film so it doesn't dry out. Lightly brush the filo all over with a little oil, place 2 slices of halloumi at the top of each square, sprinkle with sesame seeds, then fold over the edges to enclose the halloumi. Brush again with oil and sprinkle with more seeds. Fold up into a square, brushing the final edge with egg to help seal the parcel. When all the parcels are made, place on the baking trays, brush the tops with egg wash and sprinkle with more sesame seeds. Bake for 20 mins, swapping the trays over halfway through so that the parcels brown evenly.

3 Meanwhile, make the mash. Put the sweet potato in a large pan of water, cover with a lid and boil for 10-12 mins until tender. Drain, reserving a little of the cooking water, and leave to steam-dry. Tip the sweet potato into a food processor with the tahini, olive oil and plenty of seasoning. Whizz until smooth, adding enough of the cooking water to make a smooth purée. To make the salad, whisk together the lemon juice, honey and olive oil in a large bowl with some seasoning. Add the remaining ingredients and toss everything together.

4 Spoon some of the sweet potato onto each plate. Add a pile of the herb salad and 2 halloumi parcels to each plate and drizzle with a little extra virgin olive oil.

PER SERVING 741 kcals, protein 25g, carbs 40g, fat 53g, sat fat 18g, fibre 7g, sugar 11g, salt 2.9g GF

MAKE AHEAD

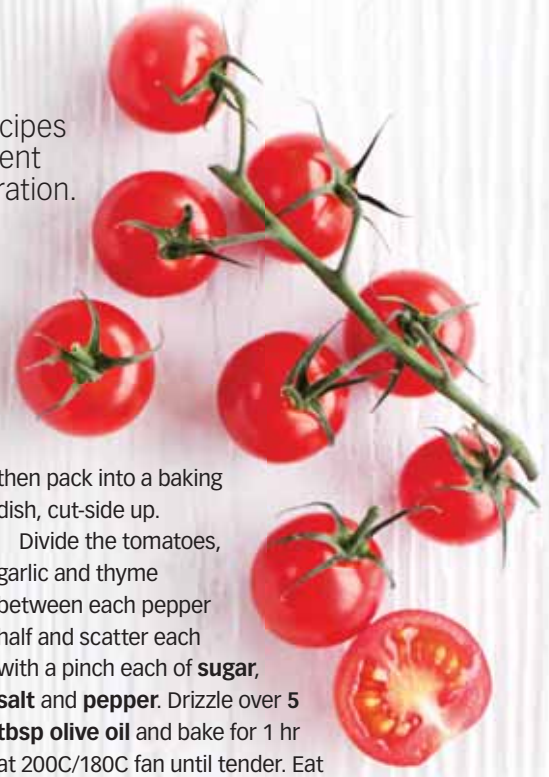
You can assemble the parcels and make the mash up to a day before serving. Store the parcels in the fridge and pop in the oven when your guests arrive. Reheat the mash on the hob.



5 ways with tomatoes

These quick, delicious recipes with the versatile ingredient will give you lots of inspiration.

Photographs LIS PARSONS



Spiced scrambled eggs

SERVES 2 FOR BRUNCH ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy V

Soften **1 small chopped onion** and **1 chopped red chilli** in a **knob of butter**. Stir in **4 beaten eggs** and a **splash of milk**. When nearly scrambled, gently stir in a good **handful diced tomatoes** followed by some coriander leaves. Season and eat on toast.

PER SERVING 236 kcals, protein 16g, carbs 3g, fat 18g, sat fat 6g, fibre 1g, sugar 3g, salt 0.51g

Homemade semi-dried tomatoes

MAKES 1 LARGE JAR (70 PORTIONS) ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 3-4 HRS Easy V

Halve **1kg small tomatoes** and spread over a baking tray, cut-side up. Season with **salt**, **pepper** and 3 pinches **dried oregano**. Drizzle with a little **olive oil**, then roast for 4-5 hrs at 140C/120C fan until semi-dried and chewy. Pack into a jar, top up with more olive oil, and keep in the fridge for up to a week.

PER SERVING 13 kcals, protein none, carbs 1g, fat 1g, sat fat none, fibre none, sugar none, salt 0.03g

Creamy tomato soup

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS Easy V

Soften **1 chopped onion**, **200g diced potatoes** and **2 crushed garlic cloves** in **50g butter**. Add **500g cherry tomatoes** and **500ml veg stock**. Cover and simmer for 20 mins, then whizz in a blender. Pour back into the pan, season and heat through to serve.

PER SERVING 175 kcals, protein 3g, carbs 17g, fat 11g, sat fat 7g, fibre 3g, sugar 7g, salt 0.51g

Tomato & mint salad

SERVES 6 ● PREP 25 MINS ● NO COOK

Easy V Vit C 2 of 5-a-day Superhealthy

Slice **1.2-1.3kg mixed tomatoes**. Finely chop **1 red onion** and pull leaves from a small bunch mint. Layer the tomatoes on a big platter, scattering each layer with onion, mint and seasoning. Mix **2 tbsp red wine vinegar**, **2 tbsp olive oil** and **1 tsp sugar**, pour over and leave at room temperature until ready to eat.

PER SERVING 77 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 8g, fat 4g, sat fat 1g, fibre 2g, sugar 8g, salt 0.05g

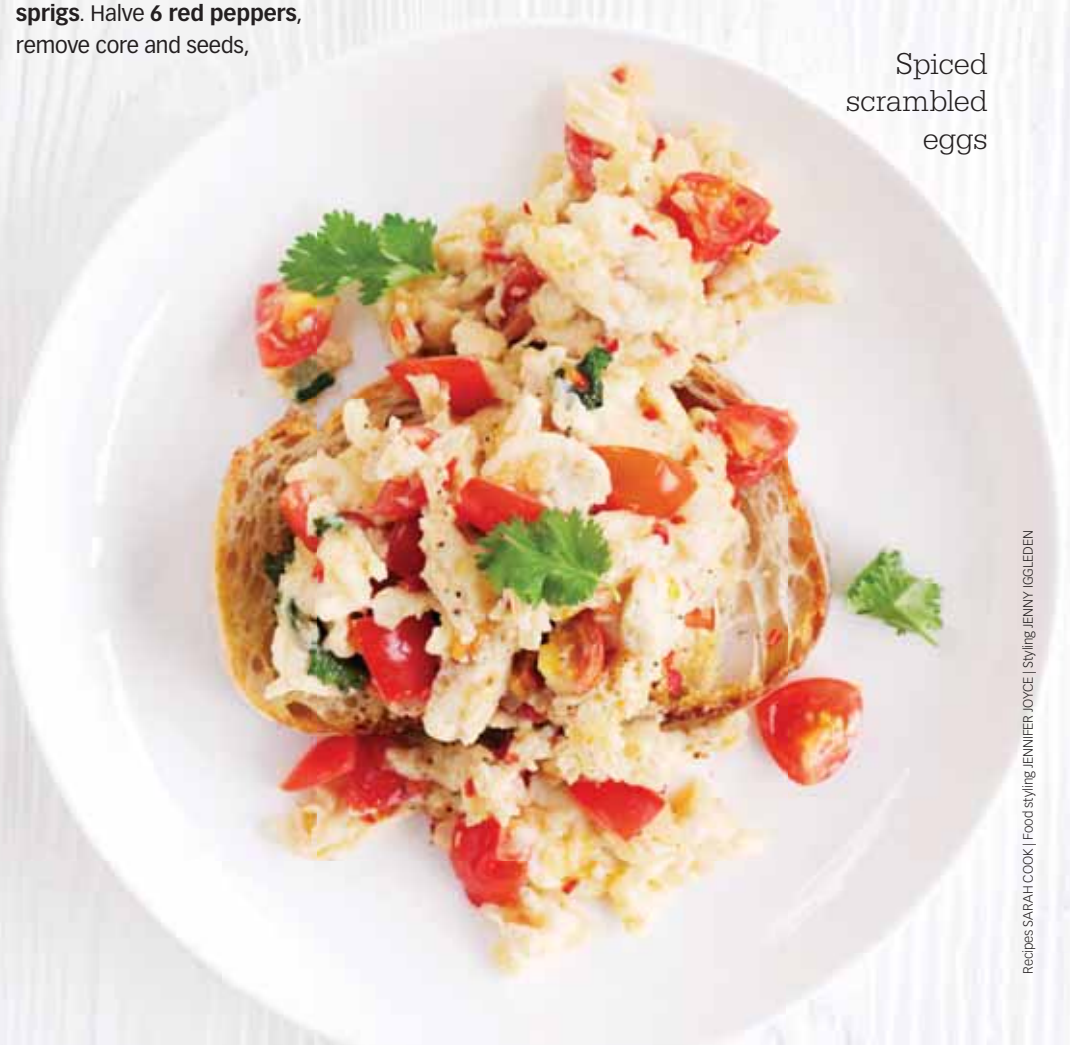
Roasted tomatoes with peppers, garlic & thyme

SERVES 6-8 AS A STARTER ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 1 HR Easy V 2 of 5-a-day Superhealthy

Halve **200g small plum tomatoes**, thinly slice **3 garlic cloves** and strip leaves from **3 thyme sprigs**. Halve **6 red peppers**, remove core and seeds, then pack into a baking dish, cut-side up.

Divide the tomatoes, garlic and thyme between each pepper half and scatter each with a pinch each of **sugar**, **salt** and **pepper**. Drizzle over **5 tbsp olive oil** and bake for 1 hr at 200C/180C fan until tender. Eat with crusty bread, more olive oil and good balsamic vinegar.

PER SERVING 140 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 12g, fat 10g, sat fat 1g, fibre 3g, sugar 11g, salt 0.36g GF



Spiced scrambled eggs

Recipes SARAH COOK | Food styling JENNIFER JOYCE | Styling JENNY IGGLEDEN

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Kitchen notes

Nutrition advice, cooking tips and product picks for your pantry.

Reader tip of the month



When cooking in a crockpot, rememer that every time you open the lid to check on the dish, you need to add 15-20 minutes more to the cooking time.

- Kayla Miles

Got a great tip you want to share?
Get in touch with us on facebook or twitter



Brit fest in the supermarket!

Choithrams have teamed up with one of Britain's biggest retailers, Tesco, to launch their products across all their stores in the UAE. You can now shop for a wide selection of pasta, cereals, canned goods, sauces, oils and frozen items as well as organic and gluten-free products. Tesco's premium range of products, Finest, are also available for gourmands to enjoy. Tesco's full selection, including cheeses, cold cuts and non-food items will be available from September onwards. Look out for Tesco products on aisles at your nearest Choithrams store.

SMART FOOD SWAPS



Tech for taste



Did you know how much help you can get out of technology while cooking? Download the Google Now app on your phone or tablet, and watch your kitchen turn into a sci-fi-style smart home of the future. The app has voice-activated search which lets you search the internet – at Google's renowned search speeds of course! – for everything from cooking tips and how-to videos, to conversions, nutritional info and lots more. What's more, you can also ask the app to put in reminders in your calendar for grocery shopping, also by voice. So you never have to stain your iPad with flour-coated fingers again! Google google now to find out more (get it?).

Health update> FULL OF GOODNESS

Everyone knows beetroot has numerous nutritional and health benefits, but did you know that apart from juicing and eating it boiled or raw, you can have it as tea as well? Make a cup at home by boiling peeled and chopped beetroots with green or herbal mint tea bags, honey and lemon juice. Let the mixture steep for 20 minutes, strain and enjoy hot or cold. Conia General Trading have recently launched a Beet Tea as well, which is made with natural beetroot and pure green tea (available at www.beettea.com). Apart from the many nutritional benefits, the tea is known for its cleansing and detoxifying properties.

Look what we found!

3 great new products for your kitchen



We will be spreading this white almond butter over rye bread toast – healthy and delicious! Dhs30 at Biorganic.



Amp up your salad, oatmeal and smoothies with Linwoods Milled flaxseed mixes (available with berries, seeds, and cocoa). Dhs45 for a 360g bag, at Holland and Barett, UAE.

The Cicatelli durum wheat pasta with chilli gives any pasta dish a fiery kick. Dhs30 at Carluccio's.



Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED; SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



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Pasta fantastica!

We tend to take pasta for granted – it's the staple we turn to for a quick midweek supper. But with a little inspiration from the Italians, pasta can be transformed into an impressive dish to serve to friends or for an indulgent supper for two. Recipes CASSIE BEST Photographs DAVID MUNNS

Walnut & red pepper pesto pasta

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 15 MINS Easy V ❄ SAUCE ONLY

400g strozzapreti or casarecce pasta, or any other short pasta shape
100g walnuts
3 roasted red peppers, roughly chopped
25g Parmesan, or a vegetarian alternative, plus extra to serve
1 small garlic clove, roughly chopped
Large pack basil, plus a few leaves to serve
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
50g mascarpone

1 Cook the pasta following pack instructions. Meanwhile, toast the walnuts in a dry pan for a few mins. Add half the walnuts to the small bowl of a food processor or a hand chopper, along with the red peppers, Parmesan, garlic, basil, oil and some seasoning. Whizz to a paste, adding a splash of water from the pasta if it is a little dry.

2 Drain the pasta, reserving a cup of the cooking water. Return the pasta to the pan and set over a low heat. Add the pesto, mascarpone and 3-4 tbsp of the reserved pasta water, then stir until the mascarpone has melted, adding a splash more pasta water if the sauce needs thinning. To serve, crush the remaining walnuts in your hand and scatter over the pasta with a few more basil leaves and some extra Parmesan.

PER SERVING 589 kcals, protein 19g, carbs 56g, fat 33g, sat fat 8g, fibre 1g, sugar 2g, salt 0.2g >>

Food styling LIZZIE HARRIS | Styling VICTORIA ALLEN | Wine notes SARAH JANE EVANS MW



Orecchiette with anchovies & purple sprouting broccoli

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 15 MINS Easy

Calcium Folate Fibre Vit C 1 of 5-a-day

200g orecchiette
4 tbsp olive oil
6 anchovy fillets in oil, chopped (reserve 1 tbsp of the oil)
4 fat garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 red chilli, thinly sliced
Zest 1 lemon, plus juice ½
50g fresh breadcrumbs
200g purple sprouting broccoli

1 Cook the orecchiette following pack instructions. Meanwhile, heat 3 tbsp of the olive oil and 1 tbsp of the oil from the anchovies in a frying pan. Add the garlic and chilli, and sizzle for 3-4 mins until the garlic is just starting to turn golden. Add the anchovies and lemon juice, and cook for 1-2 mins more until the anchovies melt into the sauce. Put the remaining olive oil, breadcrumbs and lemon zest in another frying pan, stir together and cook until crisp.
2 When the pasta has 4-5 mins to go, add the broccoli to the pan. When cooked, drain, reserving a cup of the pasta water, then add to the frying pan with the garlic and anchovies. Stir and cook over a low heat for a further 2 mins, adding a splash of pasta water if it looks dry. Season, then serve in pasta bowls with the lemony crumbs sprinkled over the top.

PER SERVING 624 kcals, protein 21g, carbs 76g, fat 27g, sat fat 4g, fibre 6g, sugar 4g, salt 1.5g

Venetian duck ragu

SERVES 6 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 2 HRS 30 MINS Easy SAUCE ONLY

Low fat Iron 2 of 5-a-day Good for you

1 tbsp olive oil
4 duck legs
2 onions, finely chopped
2 fat garlic cloves, crushed
2 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tsp plain flour
250ml red wine
2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
1 chicken stock cube, made up to 250ml stock
3 rosemary sprigs, leaves picked and chopped
2 bay leaves
1 tsp sugar
2 tbsp milk
600g paccheri or pappardelle pasta
Parmesan, grated, to serve

1 Heat the oil in a large pan. Add the duck legs and brown on all sides for about 10 mins. Remove to a plate and set aside. Add the onions to the pan and cook for 5 mins until softened. Add the garlic and cook for a further 1 min, then stir in the cinnamon and flour and cook for a further min. Return the duck to the pan, add the wine, tomatoes, stock, herbs, sugar and seasoning. Bring to a simmer, then lower the heat, cover with a lid and cook for 2 hrs, stirring every now and then.
2 Carefully lift the duck legs out of the sauce and place on a plate – they will be very tender so try not to lose any of the meat. Pull off and discard the fat, then shred the meat with 2 forks and discard the bones. Add the meat back to the sauce with the milk and simmer, uncovered, for a further 10-15 mins while you cook the pasta.
3 Cook the pasta following pack instructions, then drain, reserving a cup of the pasta water, and add the pasta to the ragu. Stir to coat all the pasta in the sauce and cook for 1 min more, adding a splash of cooking liquid if it looks dry. Serve with grated Parmesan, if you like.

PER SERVING 505 kcals, protein 30g, carbs 62g, fat 12g, sat fat 2g, fibre 2g, sugar 8g, salt 0.9g



Baked conchiglioni with sausage, sage & butternut squash

SERVES 4-6 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 10 MINS Easy Calcium 1 of 5-a-day

Although not strictly traditional, the inspiration for this dish comes from the north of Italy where rich, creamy sauces and truffles are popular. If you can't get hold of large pasta shells or conchiglioni , simply use the smaller variety, conchiglie, and toss all the ingredients together before baking.

1 small butternut squash, peeled, seeds discarded, flesh chopped into small cubes
2 tsp olive oil
Small pack of sage, leaves picked and roughly chopped
8 beef or chicken sausages
Good grating nutmeg, about ¼ of a whole one
350g conchiglioni
50g butter
50g plain flour
850ml pints milk
50g Parmesan, grated, plus extra for sprinkling
100g fontina, grated, or 125g ball mozzarella, chopped
Drizzle of truffle oil (optional)

1 Place the squash in a microwavable bowl with 1 tbsp water. Cook in the microwave on High for 10 mins or until soft. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a frying pan, add the sage leaves and sizzle for 1 min. Remove the sausages from their skins and divide into small balls about the size of unshelled hazelnuts. Add to the pan and fry until browned. Add half the squash and set aside. Mash the remaining squash with any liquid from the bowl, the nutmeg and seasoning.
2 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Cook the pasta following pack instructions. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a saucepan, then add the flour and stir to a paste. Cook for 1-2 mins, stirring the whole time, then gradually mix in the milk until you have a smooth sauce. Add the mashed squash, Parmesan and plenty of seasoning. Add 3-4 tbsp of the sauce to the sausage mix to moisten it a little.
3 Spread the remaining squash sauce over the base of a large, shallow baking dish. Drain the pasta, but keep a little liquid in the pan to stop the shells from sticking together. Fish any broken bits of pasta out of the pan and scatter these over the sauce. Line up the shells on top, pushing them down into the sauce so only the tops of the shells are poking out. Fill each shell with the sausage mixture. Scatter with fontina or mozzarella, grate over some extra Parmesan and drizzle with a little truffle oil, if you like. Bake for 30 mins or until golden brown.

PER SERVING (6) 689 kcals, protein 29g, carbs 61g, fat 37g, sat fat 17g, fibre 3g, sugar 15g, salt 2.3g >>

TIP If you're not keen on the taste of truffles, or want to keep costs down, simply leave the truffle oil out of this recipe.



Special seafood & saffron pasta

SERVES 2 ● PREP 25 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS A little effort Iron 1 of 5-a-day

3 firm tomatoes
200g fusilli lunghi or another long thin pasta shape
2 tbsp olive oil
3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
100g king prawns, deveined
100g scallops, halved if very large
300g mussels, shells cleaned
150ml white wine
Good pinch of saffron, mixed with 3 tbsp hot water
Zest of 1 lemon, plus juice ½
4 tbsp single cream
Small pack parsley, chopped
2 tbsp pine nuts, toasted

1 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil and have a bowl of cold water to hand. Cut a small cross in the base of each tomato and add to the hot water, then after 15 secs, scoop out with a slotted spoon (but keep the water boiling for the pasta) and plunge into the cold water. Leave the tomatoes to cool for 30 secs, then remove. Use a small sharp knife to peel away the skin, starting at the base where you made the cross. Cut each tomato into quarters then cut out and discard the seeds and any membrane. Cut into small dice, then set aside.

2 Add the pasta to the boiling water and cook for 2 mins less than it says on the pack. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large frying pan (you'll need to use one with a lid) and add the garlic, sizzle for 2 mins until just starting to turn golden, then push to one side of the pan. Increase the heat and add the prawns and scallops, fry for 1-2 mins until the prawns are pink and the scallops are just turning golden, then scoop out of the pan and set aside on a plate. Add the mussels, white wine, saffron (with its soaking liquid) and some seasoning. Cover the pan with a lid and leave to steam for 3 mins until the mussels open (discard any which stay closed).

3 Add the lemon zest and juice and the cream to the sauce and check the seasoning. Drain the pasta and add this too, along with the prawns, scallops and diced tomato. Toss everything together, and bubble for another 2 mins, or until the pasta has absorbed some of the sauce and is cooked through. Scatter with parsley and pine nuts and give everything a final toss together.

PER SERVING 758 kcals, protein 43g, carbs 64g, fat 32g, sat fat 6g, fibre 3g, sugar 9g, salt 1.0g GF



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Chef skills

Learn to: Make gnocchi



This traditional pasta is easier to make than you think, particularly when it is given a lighter makeover – with ricotta replacing the potato – by executive chef Juri Pelusi from Lounge Café Italiano. Photographs ANAS CHERUR

Juri Pelusi was born in Teramo, Italy, and has worked in Verona, Rome, and London; he moved to Dubai seven years ago to work with Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa and the Intercontinental Hotels Group, before opening Lounge Café Italiano last year.

Text and coordination NICOLA MONTEATH

Ricotta gnocchi with fresh tomato sauce and basil

SERVES 4 ● PREP 30 MINS
● COOK 20 MINS Easy

500g whole-milk ricotta cheese
2 eggs
250g all-purpose flour
170g parmesan cheese, grated
½ tsp nutmeg powder
1 tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper powder
FOR THE SAUCE
400g Roma tomatoes
100g cherry tomatoes
20g basil leaves
10ml extra virgin olive oil

1 Boil the Roma tomatoes for 8 secs and then peel, de-seed and dice.
2 Slice the cherry tomatoes in half and julienne the basil leaves.
3 Heat the oil and sauté the diced tomatoes for 2 mins. Add the cherry tomatoes and basil leaves, cover and cook for 5 mins.
4 To make the gnocchi dough, mix together the ricotta cheese, eggs, flour, 120g of the parmesan cheese, nutmeg, salt and pepper. (see Step 1). Combine well to form the dough – it should not be sticky in texture – and then flour a surface to roll the dough out (see steps 2 and 3).
5 Roll the dough to a 1.2 inch thick rope, and slice into small pieces (Steps 4 and 5).
6 Add the gnocchi to a saucepan of boiling water, and remove as soon as the pasta floats on the surface of the water (Step 6).
7 Add the gnocchi to the fresh tomato sauce and toss with the remaining parmesan cheese. Serve warm.



Add the ingredients to the bowl, one by one, and mix well.



Combine the ingredients with your hand, or in a food processor, to form the dough.



Dust a clean, hard surface with flour to prepare for rolling the dough.



Roll the dough to form a thick long rope-like strip.



Slice dough pieces out of the strip according to your desired thickness and length.



Add the gnocchi in a pot of boiling water, remove when it comes up to the surface and floats – this takes about 1-2 mins. GF



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CENTRO
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Mixologists' mocktails

We got four top bar gurus to share their favourite refreshing, hydrating and super-stylish mocktail recipes that are perfect for this soaring summer heat! Photographs ANAS CHERUR



Aloe Toko

SERVES 1, easily doubled ● PREP 10MINS Easy

Place **100g pineapple chunks** (about an inch thick) in a mixer glass and gently press to release juices. Add **30ml freshly squeezed grapefruit juice**, **50ml aloe vera juice**, **½ tbsp sugar** and **2ml vanilla essence**, followed by ice cubes. Stir or shake until the sugar is dissolved and pour through a sieve into a glass, to remove pulp and ice. Garnish with any edible flower. >>

The mixture of the grapefruit, aloe vera and pineapple makes it the perfect summer drink by the pool.

THE MIXOLOGIST



Dave King Underwood, Toko Dubai

Kiwikiki

SERVES 1, easily doubled ● PREP 10MINS Easy

Press **50g fresh seedless red grapes** and **½ whole peeled kiwis** with a rolling pin. Add **50ml cranberry juice**, **50ml pineapple juice** and **5ml fresh lemon juice**, followed by **2g sugar**. Add ice and shake or stir until the sugar is dissolved and everything is mixed together. Place a few ice cubes in a glass, and pour the mocktail all over. Serve with a slice of kiwi.

Styling by NICOLA MONTEATH. Photography by ANAS CHERUR. Props from CRATE AND BARREL.

THE MIXOLOGIST



Mickey Minthu, Bã Restaurant and Lounge, Fairmont The Palm



Black ginger iced tea

SERVES 1, easily doubled ● PREP 2-3MINS Easy

Break **2 small pieces of ginger** roughly, and place it at the bottom of a cocktail shaker. Add **60ml black tea**, **10ml store-bought cinnamon syrup**, **40ml store-bought peach purée**, **40ml orange juice** and **10ml lime juice**. Fill the shaker with ice and shake well. Double strain in tall glass with crushed ice and garnish with a cinnamon stick or candied ginger peel.



Jade Rabbit

SERVES 1, easily doubled ● PREP 2-3MINS Easy

Muddle **1 tsp fresh cucumber slices** and **2 sprigs of thyme** in a large jar, add **60ml green tea**, **40ml green apple juice**, **10ml fresh lime juice** and **10ml store-bought pasteurised egg white** or a **whipped egg white**. Mix with ice and shake well until the liquid is very foamy. Strain in a glass with crushed ice and garnish with fresh thyme sprigs and cucumber slices.

Cucumber is a cooling vegetable and the egg white adds a creamy texture to this drink.

THE MIXOLOGIST



Jimmy Barrat, Zuma Dubai



Shojo

SERVES 1, easily doubled ● PREP 2MINS Easy

Muddle **3 fresh strawberries** with **3 basil leaves**. Add **50ml cranberry juice** and shake to mix well. Serve over crushed ice.



Zuma Zen

SERVES 1, easily doubled ● PREP 2MINS Easy

Crush **1 unpeeled fresh kiwi** with **2 shiso cress leaves** and **8 mint leaves**. Add **20ml agave nectar**, **20ml lime juice** and **80ml organic green apple juice**, and gently shake. Serve over crushed ice.

The agave nectar gives this drink a healthy kick.



THE MIXOLOGIST



Eric Ballard, GQ BAR

Pommie punch

SERVES 1, easily doubled

PREP 15MINS Easy

Bring **1l water** to boil and add **6 chamomile tea bags** – steep for 10 mins. Add **400g sugar** to **200g chamomile tea**. Stir until the sugar is dissolved completely (this syrup can be bottled and kept refrigerated for 1 month). Mix together **50ml fresh pomegranate juice**, **30ml cranberry juice**, **20ml chamomile syrup** and **15ml fresh lemon juice**. Shake well and strain into the glass. Top with ginger ale, and garnish with a few sprigs of rosemary and raspberries.

Fiery cooler

SERVES 1, , easily doubled

PREP 20MINS Easy

Mix **120ml fresh orange juice**, **20ml fresh, lime juice**, **20ml store-bought passion fruit syrup** and **1 chopped red chilli** (just 2cm required). Garnish with an **orange slice and half a passion fruit**. GF

The combination of savoury herbs and citrus is not widely used, but is very refreshing.

Platters to share

Take the stress out of entertaining with this buffet-style menu. It's ideal for a Ramadan get-together too!

Recipes CASSIE BEST Photographs DAVID MUNNS

Easy Moroccan mezze

Peach & rose fizz, recipe p48

Minty beetroot dip with chilli pita crisps recipe p48



Orange & feta giant couscous salad, recipe p48

Honey & cumin chicken and aubergine skewers with pistachio dukkah, recipe p48



Peach & rose fizz

MAKES 8 ● PREP 5 MINS ● NO COOK

Easy Gluten Free

500ml peach juice, chilled
½ tsp rose water
750ml bottle Prosecco, or non-alcoholic sparkling drink, chilled

Mix the peach juice and rose water in a jug. Divide between 8 Champagne flutes or cocktail glasses, then top up with the bubbly. Serve immediately.

PER SERVING 108 kcals, protein 1g, carbs 14g, fat none, sat fat none, fibre 1g, sugar 14g, salt none

Minty beetroot dip with chilli pita crisps

SERVES 8 ● PREP 5 MINS PLUS CHILLING ● COOK 10 MINS Easy V

250g vacuum-packed cooked beetroot,drained and coarsely grated
½ small cucumber, halved, seeds scooped out, cut into small chunks
½ x 500ml pot Greek yoghurt (save the remaining yoghurt for the dessert)
1 small garlic clove, very finely grated
½ large bunch mint, leaves picked and finely chopped, plus some small leaves to serve
1 tsp golden caster sugar
FOR THE PITA CRISPS
6 pita breads, each cut into 6 small triangles each
2 tbsp olive oil, plus a little to serve
1 tsp chilli flakes

1 Put the beetroot, most of the cucumber, the yoghurt, garlic, mint, sugar and some seasoning in a large bowl, and mix well. Chill until ready to serve. *Can be made up to 1 day ahead.*
2 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. On a large baking tray, toss together the pita triangles, olive oil and chilli flakes. Bake for 10-15 mins, turning halfway through cooking, until really crisp.
3 To serve, give the dip a good mix, then spoon onto a plate. Scatter with the reserved cucumber and mint, and drizzle with a little oil. Serve with the pita crisps.

PER SERVING 256 kcals, protein 10g, carbs 42g, fat 5g, sat fat 2g, fibre 3g, sugar 7g, salt 0.9g



Honey & cumin chicken and aubergine skewers with pistachio dukkah

SERVES 8 ● PREP 25 MINS PLUS MARINATING ● COOK 30 MINS

Easy Iron 1 of 5-a-day Gluten Free

Serve these sticky skewers alongside the beetroot dip – dunk in, then roll in the spiced dukkah for a taste sensation!

6 chicken breasts, sliced into long, thin strips
2 large aubergines, cut into 3cm cubes
FOR THE MARINADE
3 tbsp cumin seeds
1 tbsp ground cumin
4 tbsp clear honey, plus 2 tbsp for drizzling
2 tbsp olive oil
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
FOR THE DUKKAH
2 tbsp sesame seeds
2 tsp each cumin and coriander seeds
50g shelled pistachios
1 tsp sweet paprika
1 tsp crushed black pepper

1 Pre-soak wooden skewers in warm water for 20 mins. (You will need about 32 skewers and they must be able to fit inside a griddle pan or frying pan.) Meanwhile, mix the marinade ingredients and some seasoning in a large bowl, then tip half into another bowl. Add the chicken to 1 bowl and the aubergine to the other. (If you're not catering for vegetarians, you can mix them together in one bowl.) Leave to marinate in the fridge for at least 20 mins, or up to 24 hrs.
2 To make the dukkah, toast the sesame, cumin and coriander seeds in a dry pan until aromatic. Meanwhile, tip the pistachios into a small food processor and blitz until finely chopped, but still with some texture, then transfer to a bowl. Tip the toasted seeds and spices into the processor and blitz again until finely chopped, then add these to the pistachios, along with the paprika, black pepper and a good pinch of salt. Mix, then set aside until ready to serve.
3 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Thread the aubergine onto skewers, about 4-5 chunks per skewer, and place on 2 parchment-lined trays. Bake for 20-25 mins until tender and golden, turning the skewers and swapping the trays halfway through cooking.
4 Meanwhile, heat a griddle pan or a frying pan (or use both to speed up the cooking) over a medium-high heat. Thread the chicken pieces onto the remaining skewers. Cook the chicken skewers in batches in the hot pan, turning regularly to prevent the honey burning. When nicely charred, but not cooked through, transfer to a baking tray. When all the chicken skewers are browned, drizzle them and the aubergine skewers with the remaining honey. Pop the chicken into the oven with the aubergine for the final 5-10 mins cooking, or until they are cooked through and sticky. Serve the skewers with a bowl of dukkah for dipping (see tip, below right).

PER SERVING 236 kcals, protein 27g, carbs 15g, fat 9g, sat fat 1g, fibre 5g, sugar 14g, salt 0.2g

TIP Why not make a bigger batch of dukkah and keep it in a jar (it will keep for 1 month)? Serve as a dip with olive oil & bread, or use to coat chicken, fish or tofu.

TIP If you have any marinade left over in the bowl after assembling the skewers, pour into a saucepan and boil rapidly until it has reduced to a sticky glaze.

Use this to brush over the skewers as they cook – just make sure you don't mix up the glazes if you have vegetarians coming.



Orange & feta giant couscous salad

SERVES 8 ● PREP 25 MINS PLUS COOLING ● COOK 10 MINS Easy V

Calcium Folate Vit C 1 of 5-a-day

300g pack giant couscous
5 oranges, 3 zested
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
3 tbsp olive oil
3 tbsp harissa
2 tsp each of ground cinnamon and ground coriander
2 small red onions, halved and thinly sliced
2 x 200g packs feta, crumbled into chunky pieces
Small bunch of mint, leaves picked and chopped
Small bunch of coriander, chopped
100g bag baby spinach

1 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Add the couscous and cook following pack instructions. Meanwhile, cut the peel off the oranges with a small fruit knife, then cut into segments – catching any juice in a large bowl. Set the orange segments to one side.
2 When the couscous is cooked, drain, then add to the bowl with the orange juice. Add the orange zest and lemon zest and juice, olive oil, harissa, spices, and some seasoning. Leave to cool, stirring every now and then to prevent it from sticking together. *Can now be chilled for up to 24 hrs.*
3 Once cooled, add the remaining ingredients, including the orange segments, to the couscous. Gently toss everything together, being careful not to break up the orange too much. Serve at room temperature. *Any leftovers can be kept in the fridge for up to 2 days.*

PER SERVING 335 kcals, protein 14g, carbs 34g, fat 15g, sat fat 8g, fibre 4g, sugar 8g, salt 2.0g

Honeyed nut & pomegranate pots

SERVES 8 ● PREP 20 MINS PLUS CHILLING ● NO COOK Easy

This gorgeous dessert uses crushed shredded wheat as a base – when soaked in honey and mixed with pistachios, it tastes just like sticky, sweet baklava! You can make these up to 24 hrs ahead to save time on the day.

85g shredded wheat, crushed
200g pistachios, chopped
100g honey
Juice ½ orange
300ml pot double cream
½ x 250g pot Greek yoghurt
2 tsp rose water
110g pot pomegranate seeds

1 In a bowl, mix the crushed shredded wheat with the nuts, 50ml of the honey and the orange juice, then divide between 8 small glasses or teacups.
2 Whip the cream until very softly whipped, then fold in the yoghurt, remaining honey and rose water. Divide this between the pots, too. Chill for at least 2 hrs, or up to 24 hrs. Before serving, top the pots with pomegranate seeds.

PER SERVING 424 kcals, protein 9g, carbs 25g, fat 33g, sat fat 15g, fibre 4g, sugar 15g, salt 0.1g GF

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Summer sorbets

When the weather's really hot, an iced dessert is just what's called for!



Pineapple sorbet with fresh mango

SERVES 8 ● PREP 15 MINS PLUS CHILLING AND FREEZING
● COOK 10 MINS Easy Low fat

1 pineapple, peeled, cored and cut into chunks
100ml lime juice (about 3 limes)
1 ripe mango, peeled and thinly sliced, to serve
FOR THE STOCK SYRUP
500g caster sugar
1½ tbsp lemon juice
1 vanilla pod, split in half lengthways
1 cinnamon stick

1 Put the pineapple into a blender or food processor and blitz to a purée. To make the stock syrup, put all the ingredients in a large pot with 500ml water, slowly bring to the boil and stir until the sugar has dissolved, then remove from the heat.
2 Tip the pineapple purée and the lime juice into the syrup and stir well. Leave to cool, then strain and churn in an ice-cream maker following manufacturer's instructions. Place in a container and freeze. Alternatively, tip the syrup into a large tray and freeze until it starts to set, then every hour or so break up the ice with a fork. Serve the sorbet scooped into dessert glasses with a few slices of mango.
PER SERVING 290 kcals, protein 1g, carbs 76g, fat none, sat fat none, fibre 1g, sugar 76g, salt 0.01g >>



Try our **cover recipe!**

Lychee & ginger sorbet

SERVES 4 ● PREP 20 MINS PLUS FREEZING ● COOK 5 MINS

Easy ❄ Low fat

2 x 400g cans lychees in syrup
2 tsp caster sugar
Thumb-size piece of ginger, sliced
1 egg white
2 pieces stem ginger in syrup, shredded plus some
Syrup, to serve

1 Drain the syrup from the two cans of lychees into a small pan. Add the sugar and dissolve over a gentle heat. Bring to the boil for 1 min. Blitz the drained lychees, fresh ginger slices and lychee syrup in a blender until very finely chopped. Pour through a sieve. Tip into a 1-litre container and freeze for at least 6 hrs until solid.

2 Break up the frozen mix, then put in a food processor. Tip in the egg white and whizz until thick, pale and smooth. Return to the container and freeze again, ideally overnight. Serve with slices of stem ginger and syrup poured over.

PER SERVING 181 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 46g, fat none, sat fat none, fibre 1g, sugar 46g, salt 0.07g

Blackcurrant & mint sorbet

SERVES 4-6 ● PREP 5 MINS PLUS FREEZING ● COOK 10 MINS A little effort

200g golden caster sugar
200ml boiling water
20g pack fresh mint, plus some small sprigs, to serve
750g blackcurrants
4 tbsp liquid glucose
Juice of 2 lemons

1 Make a syrup by stirring the sugar with the boiling water until dissolved, then steep the mint sprigs in it until cool, about 15 mins. Discard the mint.
2 Cook the blackcurrants in the syrup with the glucose for about 5 mins until the fruit is soft. Whizz in a food processor, then strain into a bowl through a sieve (not nylon), rubbing with the back of a ladle or spoon to remove the pips. Stir in the lemon juice and cool.
3 Freeze in an ice-cream machine according to manufacturer's instructions until it becomes a thick slush, then scoop into a freezer container and freeze. Or pour into a shallow freezer container and beat 3 or 4 times as it freezes. Before serving, allow to thaw and soften for about 10 mins, then serve with sprigs of fresh mint.

PER SERVING (4) 301 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 78g, fat none, sat fat none, fibre 7g, sugar 56g, salt 0.08g GF



Don't forget Dad!

Father's Day **15 June**

They're often the trickiest ones to buy presents for, so make your dad a delicious homemade treat he won't be able to resist. Recipes CASSIE BEST
Photographs DAVID MUNNS



Food styling JENNIFER JOYCE | Styling VICTORIA ALLEN

Peach & chilli chutney

MAKES 2 JARS ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 1 HR

A little effort V

This is a great recipe to make when you see the first of the summer peaches hitting the shelves. It's best to use slightly underripe peaches, as they will hold their shape better during cooking. This chutney works well with cheese, cold meats or curries.

1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 onion, sliced
700g (prepared weight) firm peaches (about 8), peeled and cut into small dice
6 thumb-sized red chillies, finely chopped
Thumb-sized piece ginger, peeled and cut into fine matchsticks
1 tbsp cumin seeds
Seeds from 15 cardamom pods (discard the pods)
200g soft light brown sugar
250ml cider vinegar

1 Heat the oil in a large pan, add the onion and cook for a few mins until starting to soften. Add the remaining ingredients, increase the heat and stir to dissolve the sugar. Reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, until most of the liquid has evaporated and the peaches have softened – this will take about 45 mins.
2 Transfer the chutney into sterilised jars, seal and leave to cool before eating. *The chutney can be stored in a cool dry place for up to 1 year.* Once opened, keep in the fridge and eat within 4 weeks.

PER TBSP 23 kcals, protein none, carbs 5g, fat none, sat fat none, fibre none, sugar 5g, salt none

Rye & pumpkin seed crackers

MAKES 24 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 30 MINS Easy

200g rye flour
200g wholemeal flour
100g pumpkin seeds
½ tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
1 tsp golden caster sugar
1 large egg

1 Heat oven to 140C/120C fan and line 2 baking trays with baking parchment. Mix the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Beat the egg with 250ml water in a jug, then pour into the dry mixture. Combine with a wooden spoon, then transfer to a lightly floured work surface and knead until you have a smooth, firm dough.
2 Roll the dough out as thinly as possible and cut into squares, about 7cm. Transfer the squares to your baking trays. Bake for 45 mins, then remove the trays from the oven. Flip each cracker over on the tray and return to the oven, swapping over the shelves, for a further 45 mins. Once cooked, remove from the oven and transfer to a wire rack to cool. *Store in a sealed container for up to 2 weeks.*

PER CRACKER 81 kcals, protein 3g, carbs 12g, fat 3g, sat fat none, fibre 3g, sugar none, salt 0.2g

Potted Stilton

MAKES 1 LARGE RAMEKIN ● PREP 15 MINS PLUS 2 HRS CHILLING ● COOK 2 MINS Easy

Potting is an age-old method of preserving anything from seafood to cheese. This potted Stilton will keep for a couple of months in the fridge, but once you've cracked the buttery crust, use up within a week or two.

200g Stilton, rind removed, crumbled
140g butter, softened
2 tsp dry Sherry
Few green peppercorns in brine

1 Put the Stilton, 100g of the butter and Sherry in a bowl. Season with a few grinds of black pepper, then mash together well with a fork until smooth. Spoon the mixture into a large, sterilised ramekin or ceramic pot.
2 Melt the remaining butter in a small pan. Spoon over the cheese mixture, making sure it's completely sealed. Top with a few green peppercorns and chill for a minimum of 2 hrs, or for up to 2 months.

PER 25g SERVING 125 kcals, protein 3g, carbs none, fat 12g, sat fat 8g, fibre none, sugar none, salt 0.4g

Vintage vanilla fudge

CUTS INTO 36 PIECES ● PREP 10 MINS PLUS OVERNIGHT COOLING ● COOK 40 MINS

More of a challenge

450g golden caster sugar
400g double cream
50g butter
1 tbsp glucose syrup
1 tbsp vanilla bean paste

1 Line a 20 x 20cm cake tin with baking parchment. Tip the sugar, cream, butter and glucose syrup into a medium to large saucepan. Heat to dissolve the sugar and melt the butter, stirring now and again.
2 Once dissolved, put a sugar thermometer in the pan, making sure the end is completely covered by the syrup – if not, transfer the mixture to a smaller pan (with enough space for the syrup to bubble up). Increase the heat and bring the syrup to a steady boil. Keep bubbling, stirring occasionally to stop the sugar from catching, until the mixture reaches 116C – this is known as the soft ball stage.
3 Remove the pan from the heat and leave to sit, undisturbed, for 5 mins, until the temperature drops to 110C. Stir in the vanilla and a good pinch of salt.
4 Keep the sugar thermometer in the pan and begin beating the mixture with a wooden spoon, quite vigorously, until the temperature cools to about 60C. By this time the fudge will be really thick and will have lost its glossy shine. Remove the thermometer and continue beating for a few mins more. This process is very important when making fudge, as it creates small sugar crystals, which give the fudge its lovely smooth and creamy texture.
5 Before it sets completely, quickly pour the fudge into your prepared tin and smooth over the surface. Leave to cool at room temperature overnight – don't put the fudge in the fridge as it will become sticky and won't set properly. Cut into bite-sized pieces and pop in a box to give as a present. *Will keep, in a sealed container, for up to 2 months.*

PER PIECE 118 kcals, protein none, carbs 13g, fat 7g, sat fat 4g, fibre none, sugar 13g, salt trace >>





Beef, mushroom & mustard pies

MAKES 2 ● PREP 40 MINS
● COOK 2 HRS 55 MINS **A little effort**

Calcium | Folate | Fibre | Iron | 2 of 5-a-day

This recipe makes two individual, freezable pies, so dad can pop one in the oven straight from the freezer whenever he wants to treat himself.

1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 onion, chopped
300g stewing beef, cut into chunks, fatty bits and sinew removed
2 tbsp plain flour
1 tbsp mustard powder
1 tbsp tomato purée
1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
2 thyme sprigs
500ml beef stock
140g chestnut mushrooms, quartered
Carrots and broccoli to serve (optional)

FOR THE PASTRY
300g plain flour
2 tsp mustard powder
100g light suet
50g cheddar
1 large egg, beaten

1 Heat the oil in a flameproof casserole. Add the onion and cook until soft, about 5 mins. Meanwhile, season the beef and toss with the flour and mustard powder. Push the onions to the edge of the pan and add the beef. Brown the meat, then add the purée and cook for 2 mins more. Add the remaining filling ingredients, except the mushrooms. Season, stir well, then cover and simmer for 2 hrs, stirring occasionally.

2 Add the mushrooms and cook without a lid until the mushrooms are soft and the liquid has reduced to a thick gravy, about 10 mins. Leave to cool while you make the pastry.

3 Tip the flour, mustard powder, suet, cheddar and ½ tsp salt into a food processor. Blitz until there are no visible lumps of suet, then dribble in all but 1 tsp of the egg (you'll need this for glazing the top) and enough water, 1 tbsp at a time, to bring the mixture together as a dough. Tip onto a floured work surface and knead briefly until smooth. Remove ¼ of the pastry, wrap in cling film and set aside. Divide the remaining pastry into 2 lumps, on a lightly floured surface, roll out to approximately 0.5cm thickness, and use each piece to line a 500ml pie tin, leaving some pastry hanging over the edges. If you want to cook the pies now, heat oven to 200C/180C fan.

4 When the filling has cooled down, divide the mixture between the 2 cases. Roll out the remaining pastry and cut out 2 lids to fit, saving the trimmings. Brush the inside edges of each pie with a little egg, then press on the top. Trim the overhanging edges and crimp to seal. Brush the top of the pies with more egg and cut a small air hole in the top of each one. Use the pastry trimmings to decorate.

5 Put the pies on a baking tray, and bake for 45 mins until the pastry is golden brown and the filling is hot. *Alternatively, cover the uncooked pies with cling film and freeze for up to 2 months. Cook from frozen at 200C/180C fan for 1 hr.* Serve with carrots and broccoli, if you like.

PER SERVING 1,422 kcals, protein 70g, carbs 146g, fat 62g, sat fat 26g, fibre 11g, sugar 9g, salt 3.2g GF

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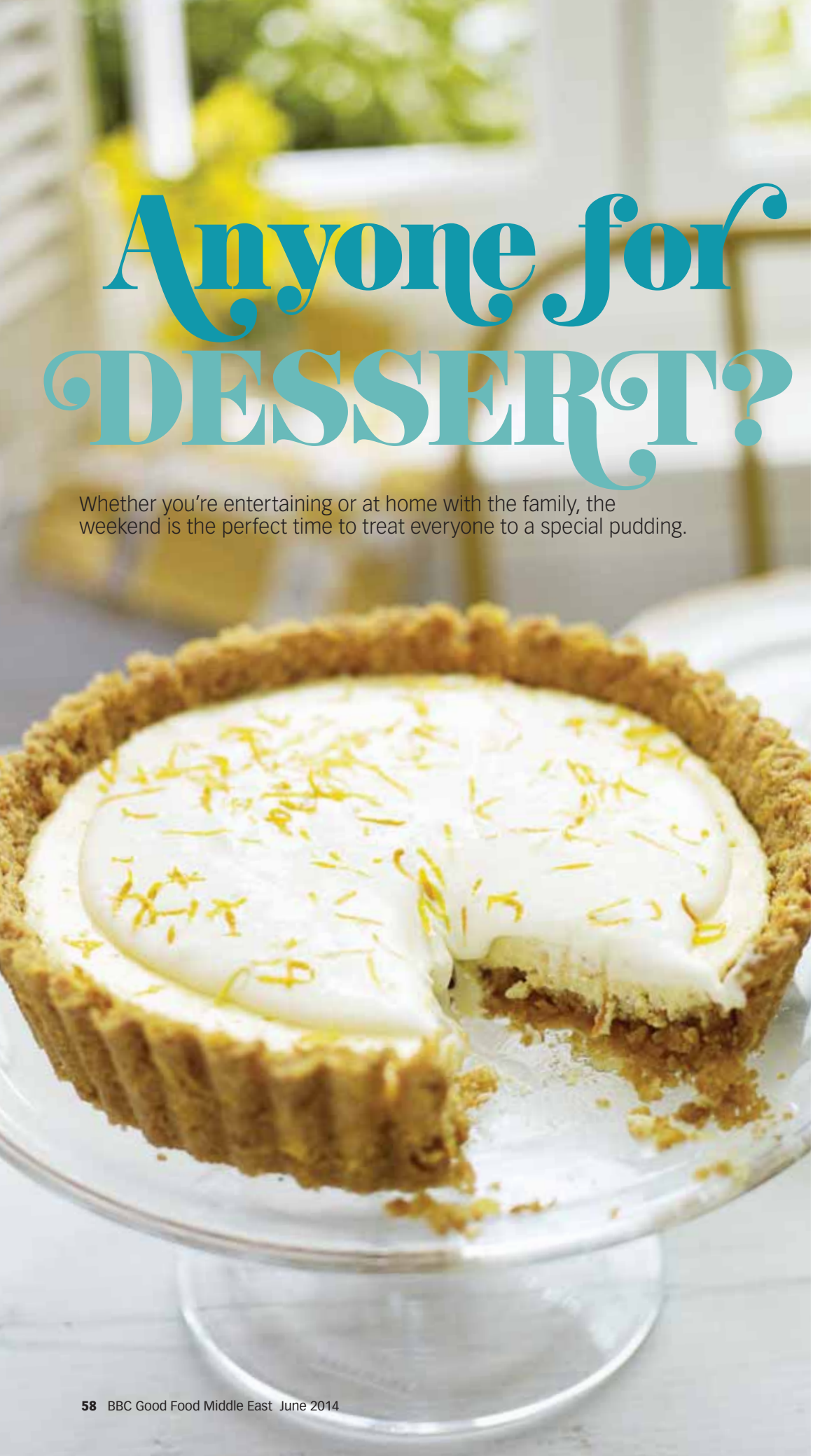
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St Clement's pie

CUTS INTO 8-10 SLICES ● PREP 1 HR PLUS COOLING AND CHILLING ● COOK 35 MINS Easy

FOR THE CRUST
250g light digestive biscuits
100g cornflakes
85g butter, melted
140g caster sugar
FOR THE FILLING
1 large egg, plus 4 large egg yolks
397g can light condensed milk
Zest and juice of 3 lemons
Zest and juice of 2 oranges
FOR THE TOPPING
150ml pot extra-thick double cream
100g 0% fat Greek yoghurt
4 tbsp icing sugar
More lemon and orange zest, to decorate

1 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Sit a fluted 20cm round loose-bottomed tin (about 5cm deep, or a slightly shallower 22cm tin) on a baking sheet. Break the biscuits into a big bowl, or double-bag them in food bags, and bash to big crumbs with the end of a rolling pin or small saucepan. Add the cornflakes and bash a bit more to crumbs. Mix with the melted butter and sugar and press into the base and sides of the tin. Bake for 15 mins, then remove and reduce oven temperature to 160C/140C fan/gas 3.
2 Whisk the egg and yolks in a big bowl until pale and frothy. Whisk in the condensed milk, followed by the zests and juices. Pour in the tin and bake for 20 mins. Cool in the tin, then chill for at least 5 hrs, or overnight.
3 Whip the cream, yoghurt and icing sugar together. Dollop on the pie and scatter with zest to serve.

PER SERVING 647 kcals, protein 12g, carbs 87g, fat 27g, sat fat 15g, fibre 1g, sugar 63g, salt 1.1g

TIP

Inspired by Key lime pie, we've used lots of lemon and oranges in place of the traditional limes and zest. To get the most from your citrus, use a fine grater, like a Microplane, and just remove the top layer, not the spongy white pith.



Rhubarb, pear & hazelnut crumbles

MAKES 6 ● PREP 35 MINS
● COOK 40 MINS Easy ❄ Fibre 2 of 5-a-day

25g butter
3 pears, cored and halved
500g rhubarb, cut into chunks
2 tbsp soft light brown sugar
½ tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground cloves
Vanilla ice cream or double cream, to serve
FOR THE CRUMBLE TOPPING
50g roasted hazelnuts
50g cold butter, diced
85g self-raising flour
1 tsp ground cinnamon
50g demerara sugar

1 Melt the butter in a pan, then add the pears, rhubarb, sugar, cinnamon and cloves, and cook over a low heat for 10-12 mins or until just tender. Divide the rhubarb between 4 ovenproof dishes (or use 1 large dish) and set aside.
2 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. To make the crumble topping, tip all the ingredients into a food processor and pulse to crumbs. Sprinkle the topping over the fruit filling, then bake for 30 mins or until golden brown on top. Serve with ice cream or double cream.

PER SERVING 430 kcals, protein 5g, carbs 49g, fat 24g, sat fat 10g, fibre 6g, sugar 35g, salt 0.5g >>

A family favourite that's quick to prepare and full of fruit



TIP

Use a sharp, clean knife for slicing the finished pud. Dip it in warm water, then dry to keep the slices looking neat.

Clotted cream & raspberry ripple arctic roll

SERVES 15 ● PREP 45 MINS PLUS AT LEAST 8 HRS FREEZING ● COOK 12 MINS More of a challenge ❄

FOR THE ICE CREAM
2 large eggs
140g golden caster sugar
227g tub clotted cream
350ml whole milk
Seeds from 1 vanilla pod
100g punnet raspberries
300g jar raspberry jam
FOR THE SPONGE
4 large eggs
125g golden caster sugar, plus extra for sprinkling
125g self-raising flour

1 Chill the bowl of your ice-cream maker, if using one. In a bowl, whisk the eggs (note that this recipe contains raw eggs) and sugar until pale and fluffy. Add the clotted cream, milk and vanilla seeds, and whisk again until smooth. Pour into your ice-cream maker and churn until frozen. Alternatively, tip the mixture into a tub and freeze for 2 hrs, then blitz in a food processor to remove any ice crystals.

2 Line a 900g loaf tin (about 20cm long) with cling film. At this stage – while your ice cream is quite pliable – squash the raspberries with 2 tbsp of the jam, then ripple through the ice cream. Transfer to your loaf tin and freeze again until solid – about 6 hrs, or overnight.

3 Now make the sponge. Heat oven to 190C/170C fan. Grease and line a 25 x 35cm Swiss roll tin with baking parchment. Put the eggs and sugar in a large bowl and whisk until pale and fluffy – about 5 mins. Sift over the flour and fold together until there are no visible lumps of flour. Carefully pour into the tin and smooth over the top. Bake for 10-12 mins until springy to the touch.

4 Meanwhile, lay a sheet of baking parchment, bigger than your tin, on your surface and sprinkle with caster sugar. When the sponge is cooked, flip it onto the sugary parchment, loosely roll it up from one of the shorter ends and twist the parchment to secure. Leave to cool.

5 Remove the ice cream from the freezer and leave to soften for 10 mins. Transfer the ice cream to a large sheet of baking parchment, roll around the ice cream like a cracker, then roll and squeeze the ice cream with your hands to shape it into a cylinder, about 25cm long.

6 Unwrap and unroll the sponge, then spread the inside with the remaining jam. Place the unwrapped ice cream in the centre and wrap the sponge around it. Roll back up in the baking parchment, twist the ends tightly to secure, then re-freeze for a further 2 hrs. Before serving, unwrap the arctic roll and slice off either end with a serrated knife to make it look neat. Can be stored in the freezer for up to 1 week.

PER SERVING 372 kcals, protein 5g, carbs 38g, fat 22g, sat fat 13g, fibre 1g, sugar 33g, salt 0.2g

Hot coconut & raspberry puds

MAKES 6 ● PREP 35 MINS ● COOK 40 MINS Easy ❄ Fibre

400g raspberries
140g light muscovado sugar, plus 4 tbsp more
100g butter, melted, plus extra for greasing
6 tbsp good-quality raspberry jam
140g self-raising flour
140g desiccated coconut
3 large eggs
250ml coconut milk from a can
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
Coconut yoghurt, to serve

1 Put roughly one-third of the raspberries and the 4 tbsp sugar in a small saucepan. Cook over a low heat, mashing the berries into the sugar, until saucy and the sugar is dissolved. Stir in the remaining berries for 1 min, taste for sweetness, then remove from the heat, tip into a bowl and chill until ready to serve.
2 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Grease 6 large (about 250ml) heatproof coffee cups or ramekins. Add 1 tbsp raspberry jam to the bottom of each.
3 Put the flour, sugar and 85g of the coconut into a food processor and whizz until finely ground and no bits of visible coconut are left. Beat the eggs, butter and coconut milk together. Tip the dry ingredients into a bowl, stir in the bicarb, then stir in the egg mix until smooth. Spoon the mixture into the prepared cups or ramekins and scatter with the remaining coconut. Bake for 30 mins on a baking tray until risen, golden and a skewer comes out clean.
4 Let the puds stand for 5 mins, then spoon over a little of the raspberries and coconut yoghurt, and serve with extra on the side.

PER PUD 618 kcals, protein 8g, carbs 68g, fat 35g, sat fat 25g, fibre 8g, sugar 51g, salt 1.1g GF

TIP

These little puds are ideal for entertaining – have your cups or ramekins jam-filled and ready to go, along with your dry and wet ingredients, mixed but separate. Then it will take you just a few minutes to assemble everything before baking.

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3's a trend: FRENCH CAFÉS

We take a look at some of the most interesting foodie trends in town.

Ah, France! Who hasn't at least once longed to recreate that utterly French experience of sitting in a sunny patisserie sipping coffee and nibbling on dainty pastries? The quintessential French café experience has often been replicated around the world, and over the last year or so, quite actively in Dubai, it would appear. Sure, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid boulevard may not exactly be the Champs Elysees, but with the number of French-inspired outlets sprouting up there, and in nearby Dubai Mall (fashion, France – we get the connection!), it is certainly evocative of it. From well-loved Dubai establishment Paul, to relative newcomers like Fournil de Pierre and the fountain-facing Madeleine Café & Boulangerie, choices for a petit taste of France are aplenty. Here are three we tried.



Angelina, The Dubai Mall

Who doesn't want to dine in the same place where Coco Chanel, Marcel Proust and Karl Lagerfeld once did (well, at least the Dubai version of it)? As you enter this extravagant corner café and restaurant in the mall, you are sure to feel like you've been transported to a café in France. Angelina (a pastry shop which opened in 1903 in Paris, and now has branches all over the world) opened at The Dubai Mall not too long ago, and is packed even on weeknights. The white and gold décor, leather dining chairs and marble tables give the venue an old-world elegance. Back in France, Angelina is a place for Parisian gourmands to flock to, and it is rapidly becoming a hub here too with its pastry counter and food shop-style section on one side, and a dining section on the other end. Don't miss their divine seabass with wild rice, accompanied by a butter and mushroom gravy that we promise will make your mouth water even when you think about it weeks after. If you'd rather stop for a quick bite, we highly recommend a pot of the thick and creamy hot chocolate accompanied with the popular Mont Blanc (a decadent meringue based dessert topped with chestnut purée and filled with whipped cream) – the best French dessert we've ever tasted! While we can't catch a flight every time we wish to immerse ourselves in the French dining experience, this really feels like the next best thing.
Call 04-4428814.



Eric Kayser, The Dubai Mall

If you love people-watching when dining, this place is one to check out for a leisurely meal. Recently reopened under new management, the bakery and restaurant is filled with orange couches and dining chairs, toned down by light wooden tables, giving it a modern vibe. Craving salmon, steak, duck, or just a French onion soup? There are plenty of choices on the menu but the main highlights are most definitely the French onion soup served hot in a bread bowl with caramelised onions and topped with cheese, and the sweet and savoury Le Bleu au Poire salad of mixed greens, sweet caramelised pears, pomegranate, walnuts, and melted gorgonzola cheese, all dressed with balsamic vinaigrette. A more substantial meal choice is the salmon fillet baked with fennel – which gives it a great aroma – served with baby spinach, carrots with green lentils, quinoa and a dill yoghurt. Meat-lovers can try the grilled fillet mignon – done the way you prefer – with baby potatoes, Brussel sprouts and a creamy pepper sauce. Since meal portions are quite big, we recommend saving space for the crushed meringues with mixed red fruits, ice cream and cream Chantilly for dessert. Overall, while the food is good, it isn't mind-blowing – almost every dish seemed to lack a certain je ne sais quoi – but we'd come here for a quick coffee and their authentic fresh bakes any day.
Call 04-3398848.

Maison Bagatelle

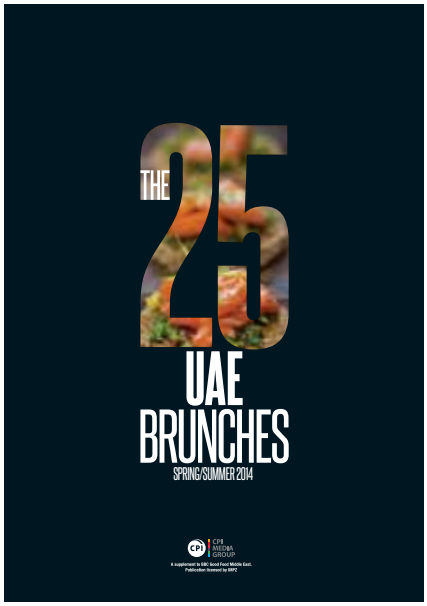


OK, so it's not from France, strictly speaking – this is an import of an American brand (they have outlets across the Americas) – but the restaurant is as French as it gets. The luxe, sophisticated space is done up in all-white, with pops of colour from the funky, feminine wall art. With sun-drenched interiors and bistro-style tables and chairs spilling out on to the pavement, a patisserie counter showcasing eclairs, pastries and gateaux, as well as rows of freshly baked breads and baguettes at the back – as is expected of any self-respecting French café – the chic restaurant is unmistakably reminiscent of Paris. The menu features gourmet salads and sandwiches, with a modern twist (there's quinoa on there, for example), as well as a small selection of mains – although you might find that your choices aren't always available. The food is well-executed, whether it's a big, hearty croque madame – where a dripping-with-gooey-cheese croque monsieur is topped with a fried egg – or a beautiful salmon fillet with crispy skin and vegetable ratatouille. When eating here, you can't not try one of their fresh pastries for dessert – the fruit tart is delicious. Where the restaurant falters is in the service, which, while well meaning, has plenty of room for improvement – yet another sign of the poor training many Dubai restaurants suffer from perhaps? That might explain why the restaurant isn't as bustling as it should be, in spite of opening to much fanfare last year, and having so much potential. *Call 04-4203442.* GF

Reviews by SUDESHNA GHOSH, NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED

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SNAPSHOTS from our latest Food Club Premium members' event

Last month we got eight lucky Food Club Premium members together for a cooking class and gourmet lunch at Asado restaurant, The Palace Downtown Dubai.

It didn't take long for our Food Club Premium members to put their hands up when we invited them to come along for an afternoon of cooking and eating with chef Gabriel Stivala at Asado restaurant. The lucky eight participants that were selected were joined by Sudeshna and Marizel from the *BBC Good Food ME* team, to be the first to preview the new cooking classes at Asado. They spent a thorough four-hour session, learning everything about Argentinian cuisine, and picking up useful cooking tips along the way. Chef Gabriel showed how to make a five course menu, starting with ceviche, and ending with a traditional Argentinian rice pudding, that everyone got a chance to get hands-on with making. At the end of the cooking session, participants sat down to enjoy a gourmet lunch, and left armed with goodie bags, recipes, and plenty of expert know-how.

ON THE MENU

Scallop ceviche with spicy mango foam, avocado and coriander ice cream

* * *

Grilled baby goat ravioli with mustard quince and goat cheese cream

* * *

Seabass with king crab risotto and Andes purple potato puree

* * *

Lamb rack with roasted pumpkin and mint pesto

* * *

Rice pudding



Photographs ANAS CHERUR

Want to be in with a chance to join us at our next free event?

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Asado offers regular cooking classes for groups of up to 20 people. Dhs345 per person, including lunch. Call 04-4287806.

Get yourself a *Raw deal*



Can eating only raw food be good for you? Nicola Monteath finds out more about the Raw Food diet.

Most of us may reach out to a salad choc-full of raw vegetables whenever we attempt to eat healthy, but there are some people whose diet only comprises such food. Imagine – a life without piping hot stir-fries, baked dishes, or, heaven forbid, cookies! Apparently, life on a raw food diet doesn't have to be all salads and smoothies, it can be delicious too, say experts. The raw food diet, or raw foodism, has been gaining popularity, and not just among Hollywood stars but also nutritionists. "The raw food diet is based upon the notion that plant or living food is of its highest nutritional quality and state when it is in its most natural form," says Astrid Purzer, founder of organic detox diet and raw food delivery service, Detox Delight.

Not just salads!

The raw food diet primarily comprises of plant foods. However, not all raw foodists shun meat or dairy – those who do eat them, choose grass-fed meat and unpaseturised milk. The diet includes fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, herbs, sea vegetables, and fermented foods as the primary sources of nutrition. And even without dairy, milks, cheeses and creams aren't eliminated entirely – they are, instead, made from raw, soaked nuts.

Raw foodism doesn't mean all food has to literally be eaten raw – partial cooking is allowed, at certain temperatures. "Cooking food above 47C depletes the enzymes, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients that are naturally present in food," says Christine Burgess, a raw food expert and Executive Chef at Karkloof Safari Spa in South Africa.

While raw food has been eaten by humans for as long as they existed, the raw food movement as a health trend became a thing in the 1930s. American Naturopath, Dr. Herbert Shelton, and Ann Wigmore, a Lithuanian nutritionist and holistic health practioner, began to realise the benefits of eating raw or living foods – making them the earliest pioneers of the movement. Ann Wigmore co-founded the Hippocrates Health Institute in Florida, which is known for healing the body, mind and spirit with living foods, while Dr. Herbert Shelton founded the Natural Hygiene movement, which promotes eating raw food as an alternative

Text by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs: SUPPLIED, PHOTOS.COM

to medicine. Ever since, raw foodism has been embraced by many for its health benefits.

There are various degrees of raw foodism that are accepted. Victoria Tipper, Nutrition coach at Dubai Herbal and Treatment Centre, says most people choose to eat either 50 or 80 per cent raw food, as it isn't easy eating a 100 per cent raw diet and a mixture of raw and cooked foods generally works well for the body as well. Alison Andrews, raw foodist and founder of Dubai-based raw food website lovingitraw.com, tells us that when you consume 75 per cent or more raw food, it is generally considered a raw diet. Alison follows a high raw diet – a mixture of raw and cooked foods – and points out that people should not worry about how much raw food they include in their diet, and do what works best for them.

Benefits of raw

"An interesting way to look at raw food is to think of it as nature's medicine. Plant food is a potent addition to our health, offering the perfect combination of enzymes, vitamins, minerals and nutrients," says Astrid. A great percentage of nutrients are lost when food is cooked, canned or pasteurised, as are enzymes, which are vital for the body as they assist in the breakdown of food. According to proponents of raw foodism, the more cooked food you eat, the more your body has to work to assist with digestion – hence using up energy. The general rule of thumb for a raw food diet is to make sure that food consumed isn't cooked at a temperature higher than 47C. Your meals don't necessarily have to just be bowls of fruit or raw salad leaves though – think nut purées, dried chips, pasta made from vegetables and raw chocolate mousse!

A lot of raw foods are also alkaline, and help raise the oxygen level that the blood absorbs. "Our bodies become acidic when we eat junk or processed fruits, sugar, dairy and bad fats," says Victoria. By eating alkaline-forming foods such as green leaves, sprouts, non-sweet fruit, vegetables grown above the ground and certain gluten-free grains like millet and buckwheat, we neutralise the pH level (7.365 is the accurate amount on the scale) of blood, Christine adds. If the pH level of blood is low, it can lead to low energy levels and a weakened immune system.

The vitamins, minerals and antioxidants in alkaline foods also help slow down the ageing process. Most raw foodists steam or boil foods, but sprouting is a popular method on the diet as well, as it helps activate dormant enzymes in nuts and seeds, making it easier to digest. Fermentation is another process raw food advocates follow. Sauerkraut, kefir and kombucha are some of the fermented foods that can be consumed on the diet, and contain probiotics (healthy bacteria) which aid optimum gut health.

"Some standard benefits that you may observe with a transition into a raw food diet are an increase in your overall energy, cleared up skin, increased focus and longer attention spans," says Astrid. On the diet, you will be able to lower your bad cholesterol levels and overall fat consumption, which helps promote good heart health – especially if you've been eating unhealthy before.

Fruits and vegetables in general are easier for the body to digest, compared to animal proteins and fats, and as a result, less energy is used to digest as well. Plus, they are a great source of dietary fibre – this aids gut health. "The main reason our bowels are so important is because it is the site of absorption of a majority of essential vitamins and minerals. If our bowels are suffering, the whole body undergoes pain and trauma. In addition, digestion and excretion are important for our body's detoxification processes," says Astrid.



Eating nutritious, living foods is one of the main reasons to go raw; however the ability to aid with weight loss is another highlight of this diet. A wide variety of greens and vegetables are low in calories and glycemic index, but the diet can easily become calorific if you consume large portions of sugary fruits, nuts and seeds. It all depends on your meal portions and what type of raw food you eat, daily.

While there are significant benefits for going raw, the diet may not work with all body types. Victoria tells us that cutting out food groups may lead to certain deficiencies, and the best way to try the raw food diet is by doing it as a >>



REAL LIFE

Alison Andrews, 37, is the founder of lovingitraw.com and has been following the Raw food diet since 2005: "I started the diet after watching the author of a book called *The Natural Way* (BenBella Books) on a TV show. She was speaking about health related problems linked to a person's diet, and I decided to dive straight in and try the raw food diet after that. The reason I started the diet was because when I was 28, I was struggling with allergies, indigestion, hormone imbalance, and low energy levels. I first began eating raw food in the morning and healthy cooked food for dinner, and within three days of changing my diet – I was able to throw out my allergy medications, my digestion became perfect, and my energy levels skyrocketed. It also healed my endometriosis over time and made me look much younger than my age. When I started, I went 100 per cent raw, but later that year, I went back to eating a high raw diet, as I feel you get better results when you don't eat completely raw. Initially, I felt guilty when I ate anything cooked, and would stress about not getting enough minerals, but then I began taking supplements as well. There is no such thing as a 'perfect' diet, so it's not worth worrying about the percentage of raw food you eat. My typical breakfast is a smoothie of a frozen banana with green-and protein-powders and coconut water, while lunch is a large salad or a fruit or green smoothie. I usually eat cooked food for dinner."

detox for a couple of weeks, to see if the body can tolerate it. "People with Irritable bowel syndrome or digestive issues should be careful, as some raw foods could cause flatulence or excessive bloating," she says. Vegetables such as kale, broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower should not be eaten raw if you have thyroid problems or a history of hypothyroidism in the family (goitrogens). She also mentions that cutting out animal proteins completely may reduce bad cholesterol levels, also decreases Vitamin B12 in the body – which is not ideal.

It's also worth noting that some foods need to be cooked to increase the benefits of the compounds in it. For example, the lycopene in tomatoes increases when it is cooked, and this compound helps lower the risk of heart disease and protects against cancer.

As with any diet, there are key points to remember. Include organic produce as much as possible, steer away from packaged food and fill your plates with a variety of fruit and vegetables. "The more colours you see on your plate, the more nutrients are present," says Astrid. Victoria confirms this and recommends easing into the diet with green juices. "This allows you to make raw fruit and vegetables part of the diet and packs in essential vitamins and minerals," says Victoria. Try to slowly integrate fresh produce in your diet, on a daily basis, while eliminating processed foods one by one. It's also best to eat a balance of raw and cooked foods to avoid putting a strain on your digestive system. While raw foodism as a lifestyle might be a bit extreme, adapting a raw food diet as a detox every now and then is something most of us can benefit from.

THE IT GADGETS

While you don't need any special equipment for a raw diet, it helps to have these if you want to get creative and add variety:

- **Dehydrator:** To make fruit-and kale or root vegetable-chips.
- **Blender:** For sauces, patés, smoothies and soups.
- **Food processor:** For nut and seed bars.
- **Juicer:** To make healthy vegetable and fruit blends.
- **Mandolin or spirooli (spiral vegetable slicer):** To make yam noodles and pasta from vegetables like zucchini.

TRY THESE

Cashew nut and crisp lasagne

SERVES 4 ● PREP 45MINS ● NO COOK Easy



500g cashew nuts
5g salt
5g pepper
1 tsp lemon juice
1 cucumber or marinated butternut squash, sliced to make ribbons
2 carrots, finely grated
2 baby marrows, finely grated
4 baby corns, finely chopped
Sliced vegetables, for garnish
Rocket leaves, for garnish
Olive oil, for garnish

1 Soak the cashew nuts overnight in just enough water to cover the nuts. Blend until smooth and season with salt, pepper and lemon juice.
2 Line four moulds with a plastic wrap – to make it easier to remove the lasagne.
3 Line the moulds with the cucumber ribbons, allowing the edges to extend out. Then add the carrots at the bottom of the mould, followed by a layer of the cashew nut purée. Continue making layers and neatly fold the tops of the cucumber ribbons over the filling to make a parcel. Remove the lasagne from the moulds, and then from the plastic and carefully slice in half. Garnish with a few sliced vegetables, rocket leaves and olive oil.
- Recipe from Christina Burgess, executive chef at Karkloof Safari Spa

Raw Pad Thai

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15MINS ● NO COOK Easy



2 zucchini, thinly sliced with a peeler
3 carrots, thinly sliced with a peeler
2 mangos, diced
230g soy bean sprouts
230g mangetout, cut into thin stripes
½ bunch cilantro, finely chopped
FOR THE COCONUT CURRY SAUCE
Juice of 2 limes
1 red chili pepper, chopped
1 spring onion
1 lemongrass stalk, chopped
1 teaspoon curry powder
1 tablespoon agave nectar
125ml cup coconut water
115g cashews or cashew butter

1 Put all the curry sauce ingredients in a high speed blender and blend until smooth. Pour the sauce over the vegetables and garnish with a lime slice.
- Recipe from Detox Delight GF



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Ready for Ramadan?

Nicola Monteath asks the experts for their tips on getting ahead in preparations for the Holy Month.



Ramadan is a time for fasting, spiritual reflection and prayer. It's also a time for feasting at lavish Iftar and Suhour spreads, and entertaining almost on a daily basis, for many. "For me, it's about bringing people together, daily for one month, and having a conversation without the hectic routines we constantly experience in life," says Farah Sawaf, founder of cookery website, Cooking with a Manicure.

Since Ramadan usually involves a lot of cooking for and feeding large groups of family and friends, it helps if you prepare ahead, so that you don't end up in a frazzled panic after a whole day of fasting, with guests at your doorstep. "The first week, people aren't usually prepared for Ramadan, but by the second week it's routine, which is why you must start ahead," says Emirati socialite and co-host of the Maggi Diaries web series, Sumaya Makki.

We asked a panel of experts, from chefs to hostesses par excellence, to share their essential advice on preparing ahead for Ramadan. Here Farah, Sumaya, Gaurav Singh, brand chef of Zafran restaurants, and Waleed Al-Sadik, executive chef, Sheraton Dubai Mall of the Emirates, tells us how being well organised can help in more ways than you can imagine!



Draw up the guest list

Since Ramadan is over the summer, people might be travelling or going back home to spend the Holy month with the family. Find out who's in town and start inviting. "I find this crucial, as during this busy time, it's easy to overlook some people! Jot down the names of the people you plan to invite, even categorise them into groups with matching interests and dietary needs," says Farah. This gives guests a decent amount of time to save the date.

Also, take note of everyone's dietary requirements. Farah suggests inviting friends who have specific diet limitations to one gathering, so you don't have to cater to too many different palates in one meal. It also makes sense to plan your guest list so you group the right mix of people together – for example, those who are more religious might want to have Iftar and leave early for their prayers, while others who are more relaxed in their approach will be suitable for a gathering that goes on for longer.

Plan the menu

Iftar and Suhour meals can be planned well in advance. "Discuss with your family what they would want you to prepare , and don't repeat the dishes too often or else it becomes boring," says Gaurav. Sumaya also agrees with the variety at a table, and suggests including various cuisines such as Moroccan, Middle Eastern, Indian and even Spanish, so there's something for everyone. "Have a file stuffed with recipes and write down which group would enjoy which dishes. I have Za'atar salmon recipe that a few friends love, and that's what they will get," Farah adds. Don't forget to involve your kids when menu-planning, especially if they have recently started fasting, as this makes Ramadan enjoyable for them too.

Start shopping

There's nothing worse than not finding your favourite brand in stores. "Shopping every week is not just tiring and often more expensive, but also leaves you with less time for prayers," says Waleed. Start bulk shopping and buy items at special offers or discounts. He also recommends making a list of everything you will need, and stocking up enough of it. "I buy Ratab dates in large quantities, as they are only available for one month and go out of stock quickly. So buy as much as you can and freeze it in air-tight containers – it lasts for a year and tastes nice frozen as well," says Sumaya.

Photographs SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

2 weeks before

Set the scene

The sales are on at quite a few home stores so bag a bargain now – especially if you are looking to buy new pots and pans. "Make sure you have plenty of plates, glasses, cutlery and other table setting items. You could also try creative ideas like using small glasses for laban shots or jallab shooters," says Farah. The table should look enticing, so try various table settings throughout the month. "I mix and match old fabrics and table linens, and always light unscented candles or lanterns to give warmth to the space. Put your own personal touch to it and make it a place your guests will love," Sumaya says.

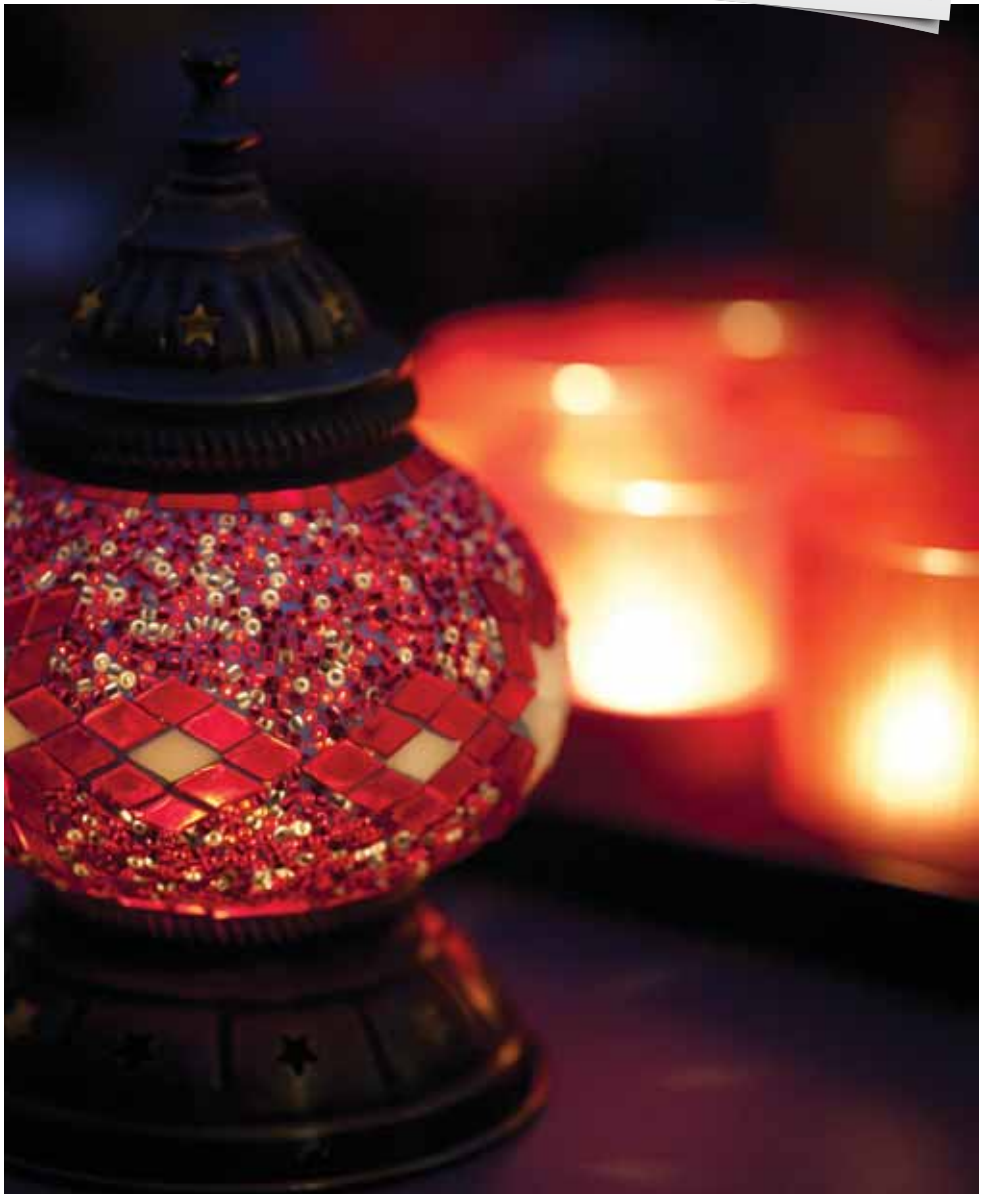
Chop chop!

A variety of dishes, made in large quantities especially during Ramadan, require a lot of chopped vegetables and herbs such as coriander – so, instead of leaving the tiresome task to the last minute, prepare ahead. "Pre-chop, pre-measure and prepare! I stock my freezer with small portioned bags of fresh, finely chopped coriander, sage, thyme, za'atar and other herbs," says Farah. Sumaya also follows this practice and washes all herbs carefully, dries them, and places it in a wet towel, before refrigerating, so that it lasts for weeks.

THE GROCERY LIST

A few shopping essentials for Ramadan cooking:

- Dates (Ratab, medjool, lulu, and your favourite kinds)
- Rice
- Dried fruits and nuts (apricots, walnuts, almonds, cashew nuts and figs)
- Flour
- Rose water for Jallab



1 week before

Freeze ahead

Stock up on a few snacks, dishes and ingredients in your freezer, so that it is ready for use on the day you're hosting. For example, you can freeze lemon juice in ice trays and add them to dishes, or blend with mint leaves to make refreshing juices. "My sisters and I get together to make batches of samosas, kibbeh and snacks that can be frozen for long periods of time," adds Sumaya. This isn't just a task for the ladies! Waleed and his friends also gather to make and freeze some of their favourite snacks and meals. When freezing, always label the bags and put a date stamp to make sure you use the first batch on the first day of Ramadan, and so on. When making fatayer, samosas and any food with fillings, Sumaya recommends writing the name of the stuffing on the packet, so you don't forget.



Marinate your meats

Beef, chicken and lamb can be kept ready from about a week to a few days prior to using. Marinate and store in zip lock bags to use for rice-based dishes or pasta. "These can be baked or grilled quickly – especially if and when guests come over unexpectedly," Sumaya says. Gaurav recommends preparing and storing sauces, dips and dressings beforehand, while Sumaya also suggests making a batch of tomato purée, as it can be used for everything from baked chicken and meats to curries.



MY KITCHEN

Gino D'Acampo

Italian-born chef Gino D'Acampo tells Holly Brooke-Smith what's important in his family kitchen. Photographs GEOFF WILKINSON

Gino D'Acampo came to England in 1995 after training at the Luigi de Medici Catering College in Naples, and working as head chef at Sylvester Stallone's restaurant in Marbella.

His TV career began with the BBC's Saturday Kitchen and Ready Steady Cook. He also won I'm A Celebrity… Get Me Out of Here! in 2009. He lives in London with his wife, Jessie, and sons Rocco, eight, and Luciano, 11. His latest book is *Gino's Italian Escape* (Hodder), which accompanies his ITV series.

How long have you lived here?

We've been in the house for five years. It was very different when we arrived – old and run-down. I couldn't foresee what we've achieved today, but Jessie did. She said we could do it over the next 10 years. And, of course, when my wife says 10 years, it means two!

Where did you start?

The kitchen was the main change – it was very small. I've always had big kitchens – open-plan spaces – so I thought, 'let's build a kitchen where everyone can just be around'. Eating together is something that has been part of my life for a long time. When I was young, we always made time to eat together. So this table is always surrounded with children or friends. I designed it myself and then had it handmade – I love it.

What do you eat at home?

I grew up with southern Italian foods, very light and colourful – a lot of fish and seafood, lots of fresh fruit. We make a lot of antipasti – Italian hams, vegetables and stuff like that.

The boys are keen eaters and they like to cook, too. They assemble things when Jessie and I are cooking – their favourite is pasta carbonara or Ferrero Rocher cupcakes.

I see you have a pizza oven outside…

We have pizza parties. I will do about six or seven different types of pizza – I do a white one with mozzarella, rosemary and chilli, then I do the classic Margherita, then one with salami, and one with lots of cheese. Finally, we end up with pizza with chocolate spread and banana!

What do you cook on indoors?

We have five ovens – and, yes, we use them all. One doubles up as a microwave and another as a steamer. There's also an Italian-designed indoor barbecue. Sometimes, when you want steak, you don't want to go outside and light the barbie, so we do it on here. It's run by electricity that heats the coals, and there's an extractor fan above.

What are your most useful items?

I have a boiling water tap – fantastic! It's one of those that is hidden beneath the counter and pops up. Plus I have two sinks. The large countertop is great. We put the food on it and ask people to help themselves. I have a plate warmer, too – a good investment.

How did you decide on layout?

I know where the 'movements' are in the kitchen. I know I like to have the bin on my right-hand side – so that's why it's there! Making a kitchen is personal – often people forget that and think the designer can do it, but he doesn't know how you cook.

The oven is no more than a metre-and-a-half away, so I can turn around and it's not too far. And there's the hidden sink to wash all my vegetables in while I'm cooking, and the other one is to put dirty pans in. It's all about the way you cook.



Cooking and family were at the forefront when Gino and his wife designed the kitchen



Gino loves to entertain and his clever garden kitchen – with smart worktops, barbecue and pizza oven – is perfect for house parties

How do you keep it so tidy?

I love storage, I think people always have too little storage. I don't mind if it's drawers or cupboards, but I like somewhere to put things. I don't like it too busy – I like it clean and easy on the eye. I hate it when there's stacks of stuff. But I'm not a hoarder; if I don't use something, I'll give it away.

Any changes on the horizon?

The kids are very happy in this house because there's a lot of space. We've only just finished it, so I can see us here for at least another five or six years, but you never know. The only change I can see as the children get older is that we might take the trampoline away!

GINO'S TIPS

- Look after your knives. Whenever you clean them, dry them immediately and put them away. Don't put them in the dishwasher.
- A great chef is a tidy chef – because you're in control of the kitchen. You only panic if you are disorganised. You always need to picture in your mind what is going to happen.
- Once a year, go through everything that you have in the kitchen. Throw or give away things that you never use and buy what's missing.



A pop-up tap, which can be hidden beneath the kitchen work surface, is ideal for prepping vegetables and washing up

GET THE LOOK



Wake up to a cup of freshly brewed coffee made with this Nespresso Maestria machine. Dhs2,700 at Nespresso boutiques.



Host pizza parties like Gino does – this Pizza Cutter will come in handy. Dhs79 at Tavola.



Fresh herbs by the kitchen window are not only useful to have, but look lovely too. Herb pots, Dhs39 each, at Ikea.



These Oxo Kitchen cutting boards are sure to have a permanent spot on your kitchen counter. From Dhs59 at Ace.

WIN!

A relaxing beach getaway at **Iberotel Miramar Al Aqah Beach Resort**, worth **Dhs9,000**



One lucky winner can get a one-night stay with breakfast, at this luxe Fujairah resort.





Iberotel Miramar Al Aqah Beach Resort Fujairah, nestled at the foothills of the Hajar Mountains, offers a combination of Arabic, Moroccan and Eastern design elements in its décor. When staying here, enjoy a meal at eight dining outlets, head to the indoor or outdoor swimming pools, gym and health club, or unleash the water-sports enthusiast in you and go diving, snorkelling or kayaking. You can also visit the Adam and Eve Spa for an Ayurvedic or Moroccan Hammam treatment.

One winner and their partner can enjoy a one-night stay at the resort, inclusive of breakfast, and get 10 per cent off spa services.

Log on bbcgoodfoodme.com to enter this competition and simply answer this question:

What is the name of the spa at the Iberotel Miramar Al Aqah Beach Resort?

Scan this QR code to go straight to our website.

*Terms & conditions apply. Employees of CPI Media Group are not eligible to enter. Winners will be selected on random basis from correct entries.

TASTE OF THE world

All the foodie news from around the globe.



TO THE MANOR BORN!

Fancy yourself as a Lord or Lady Crawley? Recreate the Downton Abbey experience for a day with the Corinthia London hotel's 'City to country' experience which takes you to the 17th century Pentworth Estate in West Sussex for a day of hunting, fishing and dining – basically, a day in the life of landed gentry! The luxury day trip can be tailored to include game hunting, fly fishing, and deer stalking, as well as guided tours of the heritage mansion with its own art collection, with idyllic lakeside meals of gourmet cuisine using freshly-foraged ingredients. The day's culinary focus can also be tailored to include a paleo diet using local game and produce. The package is priced at US$5,900 (around Dhs21,650) including two nights' stay at Corinthia Hotel London, visit www.corinthia.com/London.

Weekend in the mountains

We love Oman as a short break destination with its rugged natural beauty offering a refreshing contrast to our glitzy cities, and the newly opened Alila Jabal Akhdar has us über-excited. The first Alila property in the region, the luxury resort, is nestled in the Jebel Akhdar mountains which enjoy lower temperatures than the plains. Designed to blend into the natural setting and reflect traditional Omani culture, as well as operating with an eco ethos, the resort makes for an ideal summer escape, with unique culinary experiences to match – from outdoor picnics and suppers to cooking classes. Room rates start from OMR98 (around Dhs9,350), their opening offer gives a free night for every night booked, if a donation is made to a local charity (valid until July 24). Visit www.alilahotels.com/jabalakhdar.



Planning a trip to Paris?

The world's gastronomic capital has reopened the revered food hall of department store Le Bon Marché, Le Grand Epicerie de Paris, after 18 months of renovation. Within its updated new design, the gourmet store is divided into different sections across 3,500 square metres, offering everything from specialty products and fresh produce, to fresh fish, cheeses from the fromagerie and so on. There's a separate pastry and chocolate shop, where you can watch the French artisans in action, a vast wine cellar, and a 'theatre of taste' – a space to follow up your shopping spree with delicious dining. It's a true died-and-went-to-heaven spot for foodies! www.lagrandeepicerie.com.

Text SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED

Private chef in the sky

If you find standard airplane food boring, then next time, try flying Singapore Airlines, who offer a unique Book the Cook service – premium passengers can pre-order from a selection of dishes that are specially prepared on order. On the Dubai sector, you can expect dishes like Black ink gnocchi with tomato salsa and saffron fennel; Prawn machbous with aubergine and tomato; and Roast tenderloin of beef in sun-dried tomato sauce with garlic mashed potatoes and braised celery hearts, to name just a few. Even if you can't splash out on the bespoke service, their seasonally changing menu designed by a team of world renowned chefs including the likes of Sanjeev Kapoor and Matt Moran, is enough to make the mouth water! www.singaporeair.com.



TEA TIME!

Go on a tea journey in Hangzhou, home of the legendary longjing tea, a centuries-old imperial green tea. At the Four Seasons Hotel Hangzhou, this special beverage is celebrated in style just after its springtime plucking, with special menus using the tea – think tea-infused shrimp and puddings – and tea-roasting demonstrations after which you can enjoy the drink in traditional fashion while taking in views of the lake the hotel is set by. Tea-inspired spa treatments are also on offer. Find out more from www.fourseasons.com/hangzhou.

Simply stunning SLOVENIA



One of Europe's best kept secrets, this irresistibly beautiful country is easy to fall in love with, says Sudeshna Ghosh.

Ljubljana has all the historic charm of better known Prague

One might go to Slovenia for the emerald lakes, picture-perfect alpine scenery, and overall awe-inspiring landscapes, but what one might stay for – and believe me, it isn't unusual for people to come here for a holiday, and never leave! – is the interesting, varied culinary scene, which is definitely having a moment right now. Within its compact size, this country nestled in the foothills of the Julian Alps, probably has more cultural and natural riches to offer per square foot than most countries.

Often compared to Prague – with the same historic and architectural charm, but without the tourist throngs – Ljubljana (the J is silent), the Slovenian capital, is tiny, as befits this tiny nation bordered by Austria, Italy, Croatia and Hungary. Like most other European capitals, the city's cobbled streets are paved with history – Ljulblana was a medieval settlement that went on to be an administrative centre for the Austrian empire with its strategic location between the Adriatic and Danube trade route, and later, part of communist Yogoslavia, having been occupied by Italian fascists in between, to become an independent nation in 1991. This history remains intact in the pedestrian-friendly city centre where the Baroque and Art Nouveau-style buildings dating back to the 1600s

Photographs SUDESHNA GHOSH, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM


You'll get used to the awe-inspiring scenery after a few days in Slovenia!

are interspersed with more modern 19th century architectural structures. Comfortably coupling that historic charm is an effortlessly trendy vibe and modern sophistication that exudes from the city's up-and-coming design scene and its people – friendly and patriotic, but in a quiet, unflamboyant way, Slovenes are the best ambassadors of their nation's many attractions.


Plenty of cafés and restaurants dot the riverbank


Vander restaurant is a trendy hotspot

CULINARY CITY

Most of the action in the city takes place along the Ljublanca riverfront, with a multitude of cafes, restaurants and bars where you can stop for a leisurely drink, great wood-fired pizzas (it is mere hours from the Italian border after all), coffee, or traditional Slovene fare. The Macek Café, one of Ljublana's oldest, is a bit of a local institution, with its rustic-style interiors made up of exposed brick walls decorated with photo frames and prime waterfront alfresco area – perfect for people-watching and brew-savouring.

After a wander along the river that snakes its way through the city and its many bridges (from the historic Triple Bridge to the now ubiquitous lock bridge – in Ljublana's case, a contemporary glass structure where lovers seal their love with padlocks that have their keys thrown into the river), past the main Preseren square and Town Hall, you would have worked up an appetite. Make your way up the short uphill track then, to the Ljublanski Grad, or Ljublana castle, for a gourmet meal accompanied by stunning city views, at the Strelec restaurant, set in one of the castle's archer's tower.

Drawing upon the castle's medieval heritage, the restaurant epitomises the marriage of history with modernism, both in its décor and the menu. The historic architectural elements have been carefully preserved, with modern glass and metal fitting into the stone construction in a way that somehow works. This fusion is reflected in the creative menu designed by food historian Jenez Bogatej, and Slovene celebrity chef Igor Jagodic where you can expect reinventions of traditional Slovenian cuisine in a stylishly elegant setting. Here, the wait staff may be dressed in medieval costume, but are well-versed on contemporary cuisine and viticulture and are happy to recommend from their poetically titled menu which includes gourmet dishes like Poor people's bread (potatoes stuffed with egg yolk, potato foam, truffles, chervil, red wine and truffle reduction, grated truffles); Brook trout fillet with quail egg, horseradish snow, chervil cream (with the fish coming from nearby streams); and What about town's hunters? (saddle of venison, roast beets on coarse salt, buckwheat rolls stuffed with foie gras, black walnut), along with an array of soups, a Slovenian staple, and classic desserts like apple strudel.

Contemporary interpretations of the traditional is what chefs in Ljublana are clearly excited about now, as is also evidenced at the über-trendy Vander restaurant. Sited in the Vander Urbani resort (see Travel Diary), the restaurant offers fresh, seasonally-inspired traditional Slovenian cuisine with a contemporary twist. The glass and chrome interiors, as well as an alfresco area spilling out into the narrow pedestrian alley it sits on, may be as modern as it gets, but the philosophy espoused by chef de cuisine Benjamin Launay goes right back to basics – the menu changes not only with the seasons, but also on what is available at the markets each day, Vander's in-house 'gatherers' source produce from local forests to use in the cooking, and each dish is cooked to respectfully showcase the ingredient. The proof is in the (delicious) pudding – or, in this case, the starter and main too! – as the outlet buzzes with the lively activity of local gourmands most evenings and weekends.

Another restaurant celebrating local produce is the soon-to-open The 5 Kitchen, an international cuisine restaurant from an Indian entrepreneur, which, inspired by the cuisine of five main continents and five tastes, will offer a small, regularly-changing menu based on what is seasonally available.

And if international flavours is what you're after, then, make like the locals, and head to Hood burger, which offers gourmet burgers made with ingredients from Slovenian producers, out of a converted shipping container, in a supermarket parking lot of a residential area. >>

LOCAL FLAVOURS

In fact, in Slovenia, the idea of eating sustainably – whether it's sourcing local or nose-to-tail consumption – appears to have been a way of life long before it became a fashionable term around the world. The traditional cuisine encompasses influences from the Balkan region, the Mediterranean, and the Alps. And so embedded is locavorism in the culture, that even within the 20,000 odd sq.km space, there are 24 different gastronomic regions. Therefore, there isn't one single description for Slovenian cuisine, as you might find the prevalence of Italian-style pasta dishes near the western border with Italy, and more heavy Hungarian-influenced goulashes in the north-east. Typically hearty, sausages and local cheeses play a starring role in the cuisine throughout, alongside meats – particularly pork – and seasonal vegetables. Almost everything is made with what is available locally, and all the parts of each ingredient is used where possible.

Nowhere is this better experienced than in the central market, a colourful open-air farmers' market in the Vodnik square steps away from the riverfront and city centre. Open every morning except Sundays, here you can browse among stalls selling fine fresh produce, local delicacies, bakery and dairy products, fresh flowers and even arts & crafts, and you are bound to pick up a foodie souvenir or two, to take home.

The market is also good place to sample regional Slovene specialties such as the Karst dry-cured ham, prsut, that develops a unique taste thanks to the unique micro-climate of the Karst region which enjoys salty Mediterranean air. The kranjska klobasa, or traditional smoked sausage, is also a must-try – not dissimilar to the better known Polish sausages, it is a mark of the nation's Balkan heritage.



The central market is a treasure trove of foodie finds

DON'T-MISS DESTINATIONS

Most of Slovenia's best known nature spots are a short drive or day-trip distance from Ljublana. These three are must-visits:



SCENIC SOCA The Soca valley in Western Slovenia, with the clear-enough-to-see-through alpine river rushing through it, is an Instagrammer's delight, with jaw-dropping landscapes everywhere you turn. The Triglav National Park is a conservation area with a pretty, pastoral feel; there are are plenty of small B&Bs and guesthouses to check in to, dotted across the region, for an overnight stay. Pristava Lepena is a charming, rustic-style hideaway tucked away in a forested mountainside, where the elegant white-linen restaurant, complete with inviting fireplace, serves up contemporary versions of regional specialties, with a focus on local ingredients – whether it's trout from the nearby Soca river, or pasta with wild mushrooms. They also offer accommodation.



BEAUTIFUL BLED Popular as a weekend getaway for Slovenes as well as a destination for international tourists, the glacial Bled lake in the Carniola region is a glimmering gem in Slovenia's crown. A Medieval castle, Slovenia's oldest, perched precariously at a cliff edge on an island in the middle of the lake might be its biggest tourist draw, but the little town that has developed along the lake's banks is also lovely for a meander and a meal. Try Peglez restaurant, on the main strip bordering the lake, for hearty, honest food that is generous both in portion sizes and flavour, served up in a rustic, Provencal ambience, with friendly service to match. Bled's other claim to fame is the Kremna Rezina, a layered vanilla and custard cream cake that originates from here. Light yet decadent, enjoy this delicious cake with coffee while soaking in the gorgeous views at the one of the lakefront restaurants.

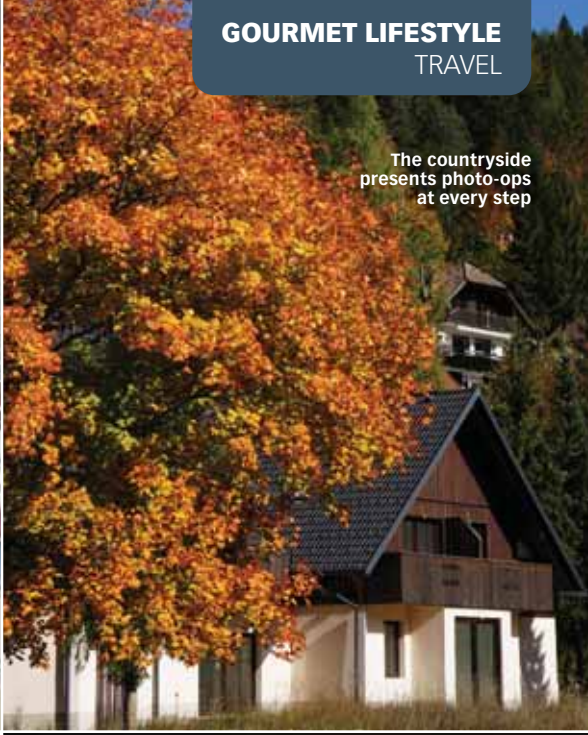




GORGEOUS GORISKA BRDA Slovenia's best known wine region, Brda, located near the western border with Italy, boasts stunning vistas of rolling hills carpeted with vineyards, and dotted with charming, historic red-roofed hamlets. Stop by Klet Dobrovo, a traditional wine cellar housed in a historic castle, to sample some fine wines, while munching on fresh cheese, bread and ham – it's the ultimate summation of life's simple pleasures!


One of the gourmet creations at Strelec


Ljubljana's very own lock bridge


The countryside presents photo-ops at every step


Modernity and history collide at Strelec restaurant

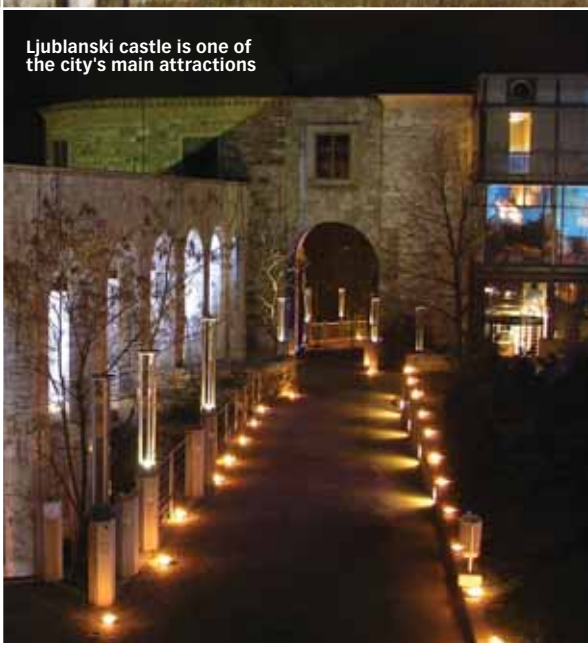

Beautiful, fresh local produce is abundant in Slovenia's markets

While there is much more to Slovenian cuisine than the typically East European sausages, potatoes and ancient grains like buckwheat and millet, a good place to get a taste for the classic cuisine is Sokol – a traditional Gostilna (inn) located in a historic building in the city centre, to try a filling, peasant-style feast. Although a little bit touristy, it's popular for a reason, offering a peek into tradition in terms of atmosphere, food, and wine.

Slovenia's wines are probably one of the most under-rated in Europe (and I can't shake the feeling they don't mind keeping it their own private national treasure), with local vineyards, particularly in the Brda region (see Don't-miss destinations) producing some beautiful wines that benefit from the rich terroir and unique climatic conditions. Most Slovene wines are white, but they also have some varieties of red.

Another foodie fact about Slovenia that not many people know about is their salt. Gourmet salts drawn from the Secovlje salt basin on Slovenia's Adriatic coast using centuries-old natural methods have led to them becoming a prized possession amongst leading chefs; you too can add some to your pantry at surprisingly affordable prices at Piranske Soline, a salt haven filled with more salt varieties than you thought existed, and accessories to match, also located conveniently in the Ljubljana city centre.

This is just one of many of Slovenia's seductive secrets, that one could easily spend weeks discovering. And Ljublana, for all it has to offer, is but a starting point for exploring more. Yes, one might go to Slovenia for the emerald lakes and picture-perfect alpine scenery – if they are in the know. It is simply a matter of time before the rest of the world wakes up to what they've been missing, so my recommendation would be to make it to unspoilt Slovenia before they arrive. GF


Ljublanski castle is one of the city's main attractions

TRAVEL DIARY

GETTING THERE While Ljubljana has an international airport, the easiest direct flight from Dubai is to Vienna, from where Slovenia is a two-three hour drive away; both Emirates (www.emirates.com) and Austrian airlines (www.austrian.com) offer flights. Rent a car from Hertz's convenient airport location, who offer a wide selection of vehicles of all sizes and specs (www.hertz.at), and enjoy the scenic journey across European countryside.

STAYING THERE The Vander Urbani resort is a trendy, sexy, stylish boutique hotel located in the heart of the city, where four inter-connected heritage townhouses has been converted to morph into a designer destination – it is a member of the elite Design Hotels collection. With just 16 rooms, the careful and clever use of space gives the compact hotel a luxe vibe, complete with a lovely little rooftop pool. A steel grey and violet colour scheme, along with exposed concrete walls and mirrors, come together to create a space that is modern minimalist, yet never cold, with no compromises made on the luxury front – whether it's the Frette linens, Molton Brown bathroom amenities or the attention to detail in the little touches. Room rates start from US$167 (around Dhs600), visit www.vanderhotel.com.



BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

In next month's issue

Ramadan Special

Recipes, nutrition, and dining out

PLUS



✳ Cook with seasonal veg



✳ Moroccan menu



✳ Make your own strawberry jam



✳ Fruity desserts

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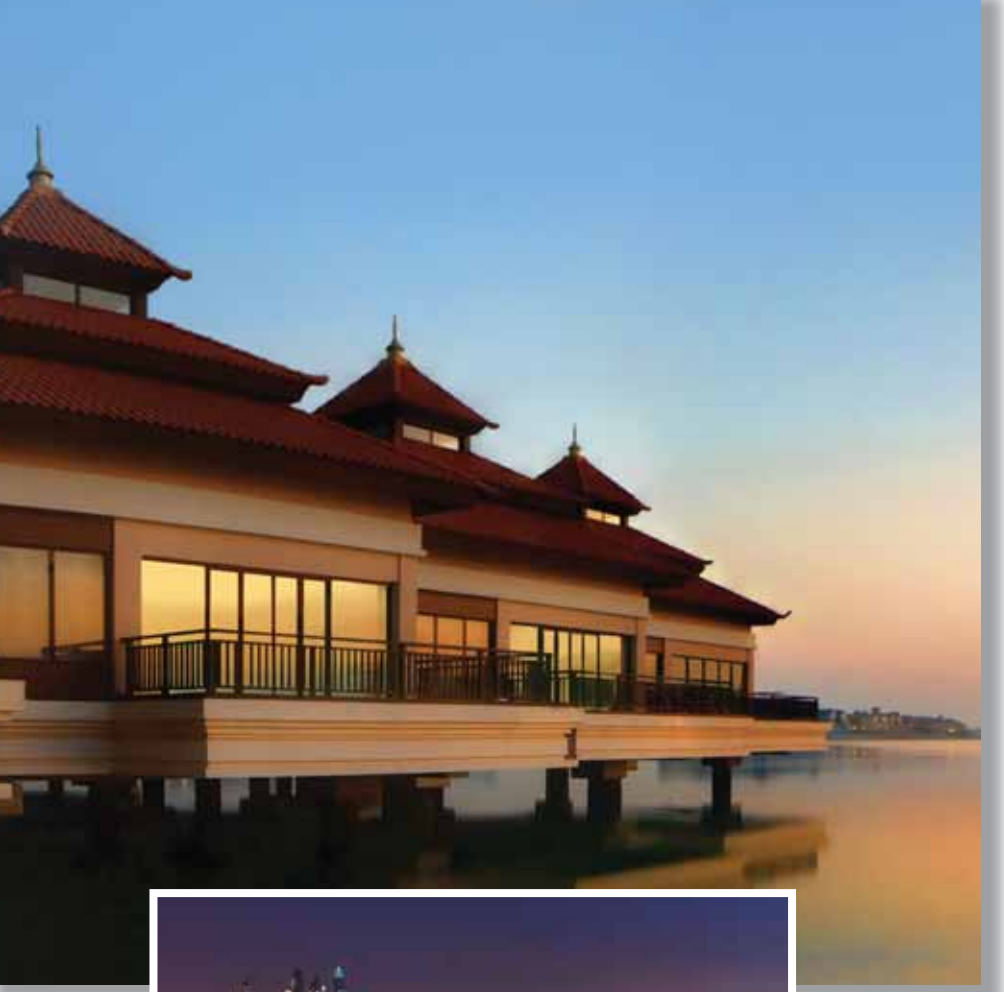
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WIN!

A lavish weekend break at **Anantara Dubai The Palm Resort & Spa**, worth over **Dhs13,000**

One lucky winner can get a two-night stay in an over-water villa, with breakfast.

Get ready to live in ultimate luxury as you head to this Thai-inspired beach resort on the Palm Jumeirah. The newly opened Anantara Dubai The Palm Resort & Spa offers mesmerising views of the island, and houses a selection of rooms and villas which boast direct access to 10,000 square metres of three lagoon-inspired pools. Spend the day by the private beach, the shoreline infinity pool, the fully-equipped gym, or the Anantara Spa, when you aren't lazing around in your private over-water villa complete with glass viewing panels that reveal glimpses of the Arabian Sea below. Adventurous water sports such as kayaking, wake boarding, paddle boarding, diving and snorkelling are also on offer.

The gourmet offerings at the hotel includes six restaurants and bars including Crescendo (international cuisine), Mekong (Asian cuisine), Bushman's Restaurant and Bar (Australian cuisine), the Beach House (Mediterranean), and the Lotus Lounge and Mai bar (for light bites).

One lucky winner can enjoy a two-night stay with a guest at the luxurious over-water villa plus breakfast.

Log on bbcgoodfoodme.com to enter this competition and simply answer this question:

How many restaurants and bars does Anantara Dubai The Palm Resort & Spa have?

Scan this QR code to go straight to our website.

*Terms & conditions apply. Employees of CPI Media Group are not eligible to enter. Winners will be selected on random basis from correct entries.

Competitions

Fabulous prizes, from dining vouchers to event passes, up for grabs.

WIN! VOUCHERS FROM HOLLAND AND BARRETT, DHS1,500.

Three lucky winners can win a Dhs500 voucher each, from this health food store which has various locations across the UAE. Shop for health, beauty, sports nutrition, weight management and children's products, as well as gluten-and dairy free foods. They also sell Linwoods superfoods and the Dr. Organic range of skincare products. It's a one-stop shop for a healthy lifestyle!



WIN! DINING VOUCHERS FOR THREE AT FOURNIL DE PIERRE, WORTH DHS1,500.

Three lucky winners get to take a friend along, and spend Dhs500 each on delectable treats at this French restaurant on Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Boulevard, Downtown Dubai. Try wholesome bakes, rustic and artisan breads, stuffed loaves, salads, hot dishes and tasty pastries. All dishes are made with hand-picked French ingredients.





WIN! VOUCHERS FOR ARGO TEA CAFÉ, WORTH DHS1,500.

Six lucky winners will get a Dhs250 voucher each, to enjoy at this café. There are over 18 signature drinks to try, all made with the brand's loose leaf teas combined with fruit, juices, milk or other natural ingredients, as well as tea-infused bakes, salads and paninis. Argo Tea Café also serves 100 per cent organic, fair trade and shade grown coffee.



WIN! A DINING VOUCHER AT IZAKAYA, JW MARRIOTT MARQUIS DUBAI, WORTH DHS750.

This edgy, trendy Japanese restaurant is a stylish place to dine at any night of the week. One winner and a few friends can head here for an evening of delicious sushi and Japanese delights.



WIN! EVENING BRUNCH FOR TWO AT POSITANO, JW MARRIOTT MARQUIS DUBAI, WORTH DHS720.

Go on a journey through the Amalfi coast as you feast on Italian coastal cuisine at this charming restaurant. The menu features mouthwatering burrata for starters, fresh seafood, traditional handmade pasta and pizza, plus gelato and tiramisu for dessert, among other options.

WIN! DINNER FOR FOUR AT MAZINA, THE ADDRESS DUBAI MARINA, WORTH DHS660.

One lucky winner and three guests can try the Mongolian night on Wednesdays, to feast on a wide variety of tempting dishes. All you have to do is choose what you want to eat, get it cooked the way you like at the live cooking stations, and relish every bite.





WIN! DINNER FOR TWO AT CHANNELS, MEDIA ROTANA, WORTH DHS460.

Take a friend along to the English Channel theme night on Sundays, and whet your appetite with a selection of traditional favourites such as roasts, pies, meats from the carving stations, and pudding for dessert.

To stand a chance to win these prizes, visit our competitions page on www.bbcgoodfoodme.com, or simply scan this QR code with your mobile to go directly to the website, and answer the simple questions.

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BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

Meet the blogger

Helping you connect to the UAE'S foodie community, one blog post at a time.



Associate Director of a regional PR firm, **RADHINA ALMEIDA COUTINHO** plans her vacations according to the dishes she wants to try, or restaurants she wants to visit, and this was the biggest inspiration for the 30-year old's blog, **Platetrotter.weebly.com**. Radhina is originally from Goa, India, and loves travelling – she has visited 37 countries so far! She lives in Al Barsha, and has recently also developed an interest in skiing and scuba diving.

About the blog

I started my blog on January 1, 2012 as a New Year's resolution to do more of what I love. The name, **Platetrotter**, was inspired by the way I plan my holidays. When visiting a new country, most people start with the sights they want to see. I start with what I want to eat and work backwards – from dish to restaurant to a particular area or city. Major landmarks are fitted around visits to restaurants where I can try roasted guinea pig or food markets that sell fiery oyster omelettes, for example. I think anyone who considers food to be a big part of their travels would enjoy my blog. I've had a lot of friends try out stuff I've blogged about, when they've visited new countries, and that's always great to hear, especially if they are dishes and experiences they wouldn't normally have sought out or found.

Culinary icons

My dad! He can make everything taste incredible. He loves experimenting with new dishes and flavours, and I believe that's what inspired my love for food. My family owns a restaurant, Longuinhos, in Goa, and I've always found myself surrounded by food and cookbooks.

If I could travel across the globe in a day, I would fly to

Madrid, for a breakfast of churros dunked in gloopy chocolate and a café con leche, followed by lunch in Scotland at The Silver Darling – a restaurant with the loveliest views over Aberdeen harbour and really fresh seafood. I'd end with dinner at Pier Chic, right here in Dubai, for good food, elegant service and its location suspended over the Arabian Gulf, which is unbeatable.

One food culture I love



Chinese dim sum. I like meals that involve small plates and the ability to try many dishes in one sitting. There's an incredible range of ingredients, textures, sweet and savoury flavours and cooking techniques in dim sum – always something new to try.

Favourite foodie personality

Bobby Chinn always cracks me up! He's from an incredibly mixed background – he has Egyptian and Chinese-American parents, lived in New Zealand, the US, China, the UK and Vietnam. I think he'd have some interesting stories to tell. I would like to take him on a street tour in India.

"I often crave sausage rolls from my dad's restaurant in Goa. I can eat those hot rolls stuffed with chorizo for breakfast, lunch and dinner"

I can't resist...

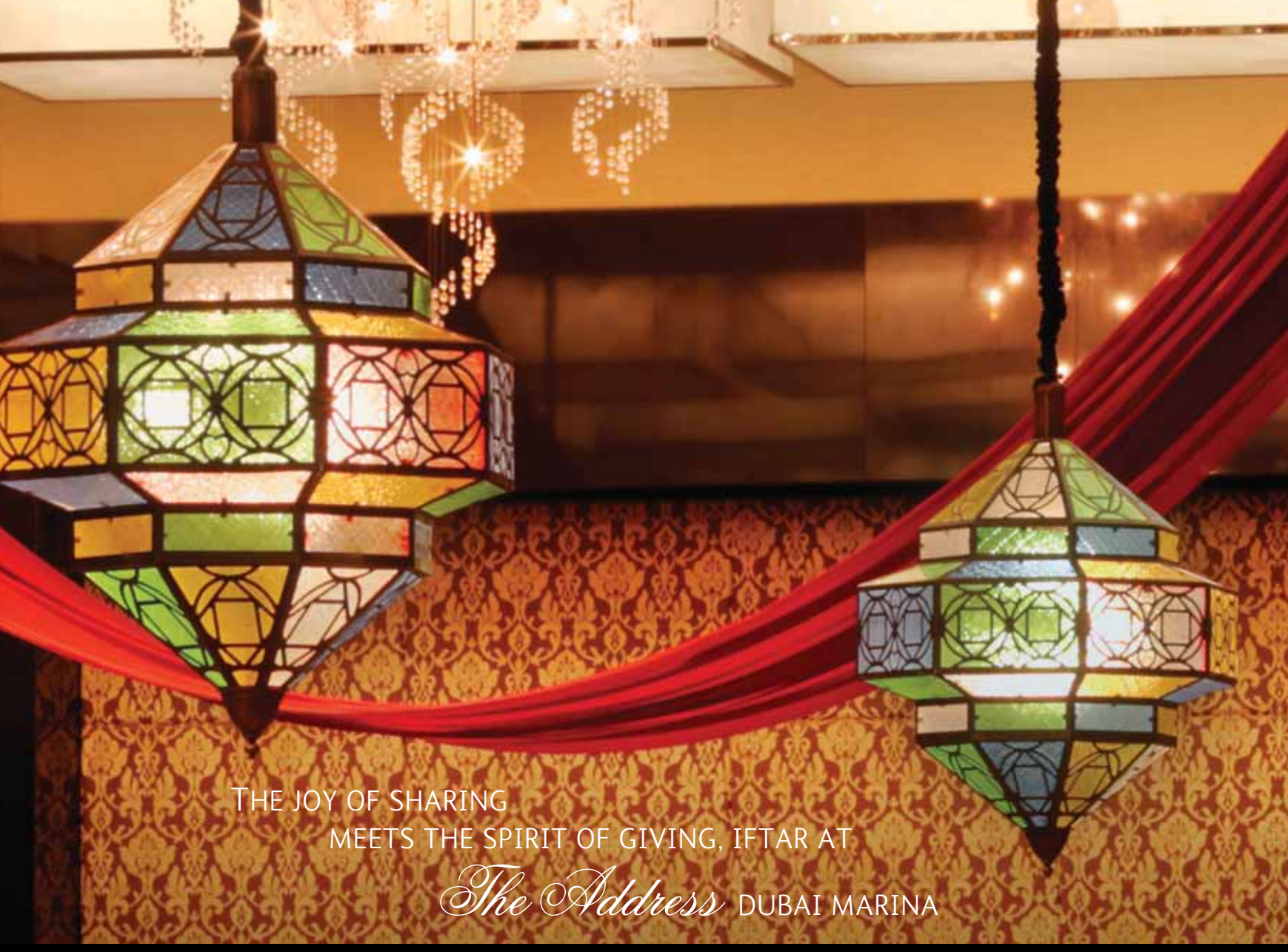
A box of Pasteis de nata (flaky tarts with sweet custard, dusted with sugar and cinnamon). I usually ask anyone flying through Lisbon to get me a box of this Portuguese specialty.

Top culinary destinations

It would be a close race between Spain and Vietnam in terms of sheer variety and the sort of flavours I love. Vietnam would probably win by a narrow margin as the dishes are lighter and fresher, which means I could eat more of them. And they have Vietnamese coffee!



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